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WITHOUT MY GLOVES

By

MAIE CLEMENTS PERLEY

Author of: *"Not By Bread Alone"*



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MANUFACTURED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

In Memory of My Mother
HANNAH CLEMENTS

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PART ONE

BIG TOWN

CHAPTER I

LIBERTY

Six December storm-tossed days across the Atlantic and America, the "land of freedom," suddenly hove into sight. Giant skyscrapers appeared on all sides like slim, tapering pencils against the clouded background, and a pale sun struggling through the mist cast a circle of light about the Statue of Liberty. Her golden trappings and frosted torch glistened above the dull, leaden water while her cold eyes looked suspiciously down on the decks of the incoming liner. The swarm of tourist passengers, culled from all corners of Europe, chattering in shrill, guttural tones, were curiously stilled as they paused to return the stony stare of the goddess. Shawls crept a little closer to shivering Polish shoulders. The white crimped headdresses of the Scandinavian women seemed to stiffen like taut sails in a chill breeze of apprehension. Families huddled closer; protective paternal arms reached out to the children who, ceasing play, were squatting among the homely packages. The German *frau* filled the shadow of her big husband; the Italian immigres nervously fingered identification cards and turned their large troubled eyes to the new land; the group of German-Jewish

refugees closed ranks and regarded each other with grave anxiety. All but Selma, the young bride among them, who was flushed and excited, and her happiness bubbled over like a refreshing spring.

"Walter will be there waiting for me on the docks," she said with shining eyes. "Right now he is there with my uncle—my rich American uncle."

"You're lucky," nodded Mrs. Kahn. "Everyone can't be so sure of things as you are. A second cousin somewhere down in California doesn't seem such a comfort to us just now."

Sympathetic shrugs and murmurs of agreement issued from the group. It had been hinted once or twice during the voyage that the land of freedom had been known on occasion to deal harshly with the newcomers. At this moment, the rumor suddenly gained credence. Suspicion and fear tightened their cordon about them, but Selma quickly broke through with reassurances.

"Ah, don't worry so, Mrs. Kahn," she soothed. "Haven't I been telling you all the way over that my uncle is rich and that he has influence? He will look after you all, I know. For thirty years he has been here and he has many powerful friends. You have no need to worry now. No need at all. Whatever happens, my uncle will see to it that you get in all right."

Her words were emphasized by vigorous thrusts of her small hands. Uncle was her gilt-edged security, and she distributed him generously among her shipboard friends. Some of her confidence took effect and fear was temporarily pushed back a pace. They heard her with indulgent smiles and nods. Even Mrs. Kahn's expression relaxed. A wintry smile touched her lips as patting Selma's hand she drew her into the center of the group.

Selma was still pouring out her reassurances when a khaki-clad official suddenly appeared on the scene and rasped out in a nasal voice that the Immigration Officials were now ready to deal with the "aliens." The word had a harsh, forbidding sound which quickly succeeded in routing the small measure of confidence. Quietly the aliens prepared to obey the summons as with sober faces they laid hands on rugs, bags and the many miscellaneous parcels littering the decks. In a few minutes, they had all trooped inside the ship's lounge to await the pleasure of the Immigration Officials while the Statue of Liberty, now illumined by bright sunshine, was left severely alone to maintain her zealous vigil over the "land of freedom." During the time of waiting, while the American citizens were being dealt with, I had spent the time listening and observing the apprehension of my fellow alien passengers. What I had seen was puzzling, for never before had I encountered such a solid wall of fear that had sprung up the moment officialdom had reared its head. One and all they appeared to wilt and crumple up. I asked myself why? Of what could they be afraid? Surely, if their passports and cards of identification were in order, there was no earthly reason to be alarmed. Here they were at the very portals of the great American democracy—the country that boasted its principles of freedom on every given opportunity. This alone should fortify them and stifle the least vestige of doubt.

I had purposely lagged behind and detached myself from the fear-ridden element—not because I disliked their company, but because I felt that I had no place among them, since I could not identify myself with the name alien. In the first place, America was an English-speaking country and a common language

is in itself a deep, integral bond between peoples. Then, again, there were my American friends whom I had liked and admired sufficiently to want to visit their country. We shared many happy times together, read the same books, had seen the same plays and enjoyed many a healthy discussion. And again, so much that was fine had come out of America—names of my silent companions flashed through my mind—Walt Whitman, George Santayana, Edna St. Vincent Millay, Clifford Odets, Eugene O'Neill, Maxwell Anderson, and a host of others. They compiled a lordly list of standard-bearers and with their association in mind, I could not for the life of me feel alien.

And, above all, I carried an inviolate security—my English passport which had taken me several times around the world and the sight of which had gained me smiling entry into every port en route. I was a seasoned traveler, who asked no favors nor expected any, and for all these reasons I felt that my position was not only different, but unassailable.

Utterly sanguine, I took my seat at the end of the queue. A little waiting did not bother me particularly, and besides, it would give me the opportunity of seeing my fellow travelers being set upon their way reassured, and kindly welcomed into the new land. A very little time had elapsed, however, before I realized that the official routine was not the happy process that I had imagined. The Immigration Officials, three in all, were seated in line at the top of the room. An interpreter sat at the elbow of each, and even though three people were being dealt with at one time, the close examination of each person seemed interminable. Only the backs of the interrogated were visible and I was too far away to overhear anything that was being said. Nevertheless, it was not difficult to interpret from the many vigorous

head-shakings and pleading gestures that all was not well and, as I watched the stern implacable features of the inquisitors, I began to be conscious of vague misgivings stirring within. The results of the long interviews were plain to read even from the back views. Those who came through successfully and had acquired the coveted seal of admission rose from their chairs and squared their shoulders as though they were freed from an intolerable burden. And when they looked around, as they mostly did, their smiling faces were eloquence itself. These fortunate migrants were speedily ushered through the door at the right. But there were others. Quite a number of others who turned left from the graven faces seated at the immigration tables and went out with drooping shoulders through the opposite door on the left. Not one of them looked back.

To my utter consternation, Selma was among those who turned left. She had sat talking hard, waving her small hands for what had seemed an interminable time. I knew that Uncle had been vigorously brandished—his virtues and qualities exalted to the skies, but apparently it had been unavailing, for the stone image before whom she sat had not relaxed a muscle. Her beneficent uncle had somehow lost his magic touch and certain it was that nothing less than a flesh and blood edition would satisfy this hardened sceptic. But then, Uncle was not yet allowed to board the vessel. All friends and relatives were rigorously excluded until the immigration authorities had concluded their minute and searching investigation, which was, in short, a thorough grading of the sheep from the goats.

By a freak of circumstance, Selma's friends had all emerged triumphant to file in glad procession through the door on the right and I could not help but notice how Mrs. Kahn, in her excited moment,

had failed to see Selma's solitary figure moving with the doubtfuls in the opposite direction. During this time, I had moved up seat by seat nearer to the fateful tables. The process had been agonizingly slow and the scene, to say the least, unsettling, so that when at last my moment arrived to face the august authorities, a great deal of my natural buoyancy had deserted me. You can't smile at granite, just as to attempt courtesy would be imbecile. The only thing to do was to meet like with like—to produce my good English passport in haughty silence, the sight of which I fondly imagined would immediately dispose of all need for argument.

But it might have been an invisible atom that I dropped down before the sphinx, for he took not the slightest notice. To my surprise, I saw that he was painstakingly plowing through the long blue questionnaire that I had filled out in London before sailing—the one that is required of all aliens entering the United States. I had not expected ever to see my mirth-provoking friend again, and at this stage it was as good as an aperitif. I found myself smiling. For surely, such a detailed moral probing as the blue paper insisted, and with every question truthfully answered, I proved myself chaste enough to enter the kingdom of heaven, let alone the United States. Social delinquencies, if any, are scrupulously ferreted out. Even your instincts are stripped naked and set down without a blush of shame. "Have you ever been in an insane asylum?" "Are you an anarchist?" "Are you a polygamist?" are just three of the questions that were in the long list. The blue paper, in fact, accounts for everything in your past, present and private life, and having filled out such a soul-revealing document, you cannot help but feel that the omission of "Are you a cannibal?" is indeed a careless oversight.

With legal precision the pencil was examining the answers that I had set down. I watched it moving stealthily down the page, all ready to pounce, and when it discovered the one blank space on the entire sheet, it seized upon it with grim ferocity. Cold, gray eyes were suddenly fixed upon me and in a voice resembling a bark, the sphinx spoke.

"What's your address in the States?"

"I don't know yet," I returned in a tone that implied that it was none of his business.

"Why not?"

"Because I have left it to my friends to secure me accommodations and until I see them, it is just as I say—I do not know."

"Where are your friends?"

"Somewhere on the wharf, I suppose."

"Oh, you suppose! You don't know!" he rasped out sarcastically.

"Unfortunately, I cannot see through brick walls," I answered tersely endeavoring to smother my wrath. Candor, I saw, had served me no good purpose. I should have scribbled an address down even though I had to imagine one, but at this stage, I could not for the life of me depart from the niggardly path of truth. I simply had to continue the way I had started.

Suspicion looked out of his narrowed eyes. He had exhausted my friends and found a new quarry.

"Why do you want to remain in the States for six months?"

"I don't particularly," I snapped back.

"Then what's your business here?"

"I haven't any." Once again indignation had provoked in me a wrong answer. Somewhat lamely I tried to make amends.

"I am here mainly as a visitor. I also have hopes of publishing some work in this country."

But my reply was as naught. All that I had achieved was to increase suspicion. The eyebrows were raised in silent sarcasm and then the inquisition began in earnest. The crude manner of questioning and the utter lack of courtesy goaded me time and again into answers that put me wrong even though they happened to be the truth. How much money did I possess? The address of my bankers? The source of my income; personal questions as to my family; where were they living, and so forth. An intense and thorough probing that was impertinent as well as irrelevant. I sat swallowing pride and muttering answers until I began to feel like a brow-beaten criminal facing the final judgment.

When at last every shred of information had been yielded up, he put my paper aside and motioned me to the door to the left.

"Wait in there," he grunted in dismissal.

"Wait! What for?" I cried in amazement.

"Your friends. We will locate them if they are on the wharf. When they are found, your case will be reviewed again."

I was bewildered and completely dazed by the whole extraordinary procedure. I knew that somehow I had started off on the wrong foot and that antagonism had colored the entire interview. But even so, my credentials were in perfect order, and to be ushered in among the doubtfuls was an altogether incredible turn of events.

"Very well," I shrugged, endeavoring to look dignified under what were very humiliating circumstances, and putting my hand out to recover my passport.

But the officer forestalled me. Picking it up, he put it out of reach in company with the wretched blue document.

"Ah, no! I'll keep this until we find your friends."

This was too much. Rage threatened to suffocate me.

"You can't do that! It is outrageous! I demand the return of my passport! Nothing entitles you to withhold it! Whether my friends are on the wharf or not is beside the point. As a bona fide traveler, I am well accustomed to looking after myself."

"That is for us to decide. You do not require your passport between now and the time your friends are located. New York is a large city and if they are not to be found, we will consider turning you over to the Travelers' Aid Society."

The last indignity was the final straw. Words were unavailing. I was merely casting myself against granite. Besides which, deprived of my passport, confidence had fled. I stood, irresolute and helpless—a ship without a rudder, knowing for the first and only time in my long travels what it meant to be an alien in the hands of alien people.

In the room to the left, I found myself in strange company. Such a mixed group of forlorn faces it was impossible to imagine. Slavs, Teutons, and Latins were herded together, their baggage and belongings strewn around them, and the shades of emotion expressed in eyes and faces composed a human symphony. As soon as Selma caught sight of me, she detached herself from a small circle and came rushing over.

"What are you doing in here? You're English . . . I thought . . ."

"It's all right. So I am," I said in answer to her sudden flush of embarrassment. "But I am also an alien and I have to wait in here until my friends arrive."

As I spoke, a wave of doubt assailed me, for on this bleak morning of incredible happenings, any-

thing at all now seemed possible. Supposing after all they could not be found? Supposing after all, they were prevented from meeting the ship? An unpleasant tremor of fear ran down my spine. What then, I asked myself. Being an alien was growing more uncomfortable every moment. Selma must have divined something of my thoughts.

"Do not worry," she calmed. "I, too, must wait for Walter and my uncle to come on board. Soon they will be here and then everything will be all right. Uncle will look after you."

I smiled in spite of myself. Selma talked as if Uncle were a fairy prince. I, too, could believe in fairies, so much so that at this moment I could quite easily imagine Uncle having turned himself into a frog and croaking himself off in the wrong direction. And at this moment, I defied even the best of good fairies to work any wonders with the immovable statue of my interview.

A man wearing an official cap paused to look into the doorway and immediately it was whispered that he was the American representative of the ship company. He looked us over rather as though he were estimating the qualities of a new herd of cattle. When I learned his capacity, however, I dashed after him. It seemed that he might be qualified to elucidate the mystery as to why I was being detained in this extraordinary fashion. He paid scant attention to my story and was all for pushing me back into the room, but I stood my ground and insisted on being heard.

"Well, Sister," he drawled at last, pushing his hat to the back of his head and steadily working a piece of chewing gum round the kind of strong teeth that grow best in America. "It ain't a bit of good telling me. It all rests with him in there." He jerked a thick thumb at the room where the Immigration Offi-

cials were still enjoying their petty regime. "I can't do a thing. If your friends ain't here and your papers ain't right, then they'll put you on Ellis Island, I guess."

Despite the horrid sensation this latest pronouncement invoked, I saw at once that it was not intended as a jibe nor was he being intentionally brutal. He was merely stating facts in the bald American manner to which I was not as yet accustomed, and I was frightened.

Ellis Island and Devil's Island sounded one and the same place. The very name conjured up a terrifying picture that set my knees quaking. Such places, as imagination served me, were reserved for only the most vicious of the human species. Murderers and the worst of evil doers clanked chains and screeched mockery in my mind. In the first moment of panic, I asked myself frantically how on earth I had ever got myself into a situation that could justify banishment to an island that reeked of prison detention at its very best. Fortunately, a sense of the ridiculous came to my rescue, and with reason resuscitated, I was able to flout the whole affair as absurd as it was fantastic. Firstly, I was on a British ship and as long as I clung to the rails I was still on British territory. At the worst, I could return from whence I came. Words to this effect rushed to my tongue, but the official had vanished among the crowd of people who were now milling jubilantly toward the gangways. They pushed and scrambled over one another's heels like a swarm of locusts in their hurry to get ashore. Friends and relatives were at last allowed on board and were fighting their way through the throng generally adding to the confusion. Bedlam had broken loose. Names were being screeched above the din.

"Felix Rosenbaum, where are you?" roared a

great voice. "Here's Jan, your brother. Felix Rosenbaum! Felix Rosenbaum!"

An answering shout came from the room on the left and two brothers, long separated, leaped at each other in reunion. Locked in embrace, they laughed and kissed, while tears of joy ran unabashed down their faces. Similar scenes were occurring on all sides. Children with pale, bewildered expressions were being caught and vigorously hugged by strange relatives whom they had never before seen. Women with bright eyes and quivering lips plucked excitedly at the coat lapels of their menfolk who had come to claim them, loath to let them move an arm's length away. All at once, a summer shower was making short shift of the fear and doubt that a little while since had seemed insoluble.

I caught a glimpse of Selma. A young man, obviously her betrothed, was standing with a fond, protecting arm thrown about her, while Uncle, a prosperous and portly looking gentleman with broad, Teutonic countenance, was close by smiling benignly. Selma, between her menfolk, was a radiant picture of happiness. Her dreams were all realized. With one hand she patted Uncle's fair face and one arm encircled her beloved. I purposely slipped from view lest I should disturb her perfect moment. The little optimist, with her great heart of faith, had earned her happiness.

"Well, well, so here you are!" spoke a deep American voice at my elbow. I swung around to find a charming traveling companion smiling down at me. "I was afraid," he went on heartily, "that I should miss you in this crush and I want to bid you au revoir and welcome you to our country, and also to know if everything is all right, and if you are being taken care of." He spoke like a guardian angel that had

dropped straight out of heaven and I, in turn, beamed welcome and gratitude. The mass demonstrations of affection and embracing must have been contagious for I clutched his arm whilst I explained my difficulties.

"Taken care of!" I exclaimed. "I should just say I am. Why, your immigration authorities are so concerned for my welfare that they are still undecided whether to turn me over to the Travelers' Aid Society or tie me up in chains on Ellis Island. And if that isn't solicitude, then you must tell me what is."

But my words did not invoke a smile. Instead, his face was instantly clouded by anger.

"Oh, these officials," he groaned. "They're just the most efficient crowd of robots that ever were. They know so doggone much about duty that they are always running it to death in the wrong direction. We all know they have to be careful, but this is just plain haywire. Everything is O. K. of course. You haven't got a thing to worry about," he assured me with a hearty handshake. "Just let me get down and locate your friends, then we'll fix these fellows in no time and don't forget that I'll old New York is waiting right here to pep you up with as many sensations as you can take."

He lost no time in action and in the whisk of a tail, he had dived into the crowd out onto the docks to hustle my friends on board. I hated to see him go, but to my great relief, it was only a very little while before I caught sight of three welcoming faces pushing their way towards me, headed by my gallant American rescuer:

From that moment on, all my troubles dissolved and the rest was a case of open sesame. A few words delivered in no uncertain language quickly recovered my passport from the immigration officer and ac-

quired my seal of permission to land. Competent pilots steered me through the Customs Office. All barriers went down like magic and I was free at last to relax in what seemed the ineffable peace of a jostling taxi that rattled over cobbled roadways until the docks, with all their accompanying unpleasantness, were left behind.

CHAPTER II

SENSATIONS

Sensation is the word that best describes New York and its effects upon a stranger. At first I thought it an odd term to use in recording new impressions; an overtone and far-fetched at that. But I soon discovered that my friends had not exaggerated, for in a very short time sensations were chasing in and out of my system at a breathless pace. No sooner had I shaken one out of my tingling feet than another inspired by some greater feat of human ingenuity had hit me between the eyes and left me gaping in fresh amaze. As for being alien, the taunt was quickly erased, for alien I was and nothing could gainsay it. Sights, scenes, and sounds were so overwhelmingly different and so multifarious in design as to be bewildering as well as exciting. Nothing conformed even to my wildest preconceived notions. For one thing, I had imagined that New York would resemble London in a great many respects. A physical likeness of the city itself, lacking of course, the traditional historical features and landmarks. The buildings, according to my own picture, would be out-sizes of the well-known pattern—straight and square, only much taller. In short, I had expected to find a city that was a vast network of narrow thoroughfares, similar in character to the Strand, Cheapside and Fleet Street, flanked with tightly-wedged buildings that were massive enough to exclude even a tent of sky.

But it was like nothing of the sort! Never could

I have believed that bricks and mortar could assume such elegance and grace. It is true that the buildings rise to astounding heights, seeming as though their ambition were heaven itself. But the architect has visualized such graceful proportions in his planning that even the tallest in this veritable forest of skyscrapers looks neither bulky, unwieldy nor least of all, an outsize, any more than does a giant tree look cumbersome and shapeless. Human skill and imagination have shaped New York into a white-faced forest of buildings that soar to lofty heights and suggest in their climb the same effect of controlled flexibility to the elements that is achieved by nature in a mammoth tree. Neither does the sky suffer exclusion by this invasion; at times, it seems even to be enhanced by man's dizzy creations of concrete, pointing as they do with penciled precision into the riding blue. And New York can boast of a sky that is of high and special splendor. On a cold, fine day, in the middle of winter, it is comparable to the wide, limitless blue heavens that shelter Australia. London skies in winter, overcast as they mostly are by fogs and moisture and refusing to lift above the meanest chimney-pot, suffer badly in comparison.

Another thing in which New York scores heavily on London is the noise. It would seem that sound of every human and mechanized variety has been tried, used, and patented, so that to try and tune in to the raucous hub-bub calls for something of an endurance test.

Whilst London has produced its own particular type of thunder, rumbling through its streets more or less continuously, it is nevertheless bearable, and night does bring a brief respite. But in New York, it is a ceaseless, screeching din that never subsides, not even for a moment. In fact, night in this hive of mechanized activity, is for many Americans just

another day to be lived under the glare of electricity.

Street cars, subway trains and the elevated railways maintain a noisy twenty-four hour service. Then there are many shops that never close their doors by day or night, such as the indispensable drug store, a sort of glorified bazaar, dealing in everything but drugs, but where everything else from postage stamps, books to beer, including hot sizzling meals are obtainable. There are bakeries and pastry cook shops where hot bread can be had at all hours. Restaurants ready and waiting to serve meals. And then there is entertainment to be had in plenty. Motion picture houses, studded in electricity, and blazing signs invite you in to the never-ending performance. Night clubs wake up and dance at midnight, featuring all manner of alluring shows. The city streets are never quiet, never deserted. Traffic thunders at all hours and the police cars, extra-vigilant by night, shriek through the city from dusk to dawn. Added to this, are the ambulance cars, sounding their deafening sirens, and the fire engines ever on duty, and answering an average of eighty alarm calls for the twenty-four hours. These mighty fire fighters tear through the night, howling like mad dogs and scattering in their wake the unending stream of motor vehicles that screech on their brakes to make way or take a late heed of a traffic signal.

If you can't sleep, there is always a drug store just around the corner where you can climb up at the counter and eat. For in America, any meal at any hour, of the day or night, is classified as eating. The American never breakfasts, lunches, dines or takes supper. He eats. "Have you eaten yet?" is the usual question. Or better still—"What time do we eat?" The expression is apt at first to conjure up feeding hours at the zoo and at what time the lions will be tossed a bone, etc. Of course, the term is

utterly logical and concise, even though it is bereft of any savory images that are likely to stir the appetite of any epicure. But when, say, at one or three A.M. you find yourself wandering sleepless and wide-eyed into a drug store, then it serves admirably, and you eat.

If night has its particular form of bedlam, then the waiting dawn has a blood-curdling variety all its own, and that is when America clears its throat! Whether or not the Americans are extra-prone to chest and throat ailments, I have never discovered, but somehow, I think not. Rather, I would mark up the morning hawking (and I *don't* mean falconry!) habit as a national accomplishment and if judged by sound volume, one that has been perfected. It might also be said that they are mighty proud of their prowess since they exercise no possible restraint in the matter. All the world can hear them if they care to listen in, and even when you don't care it is quite impossible to exclude the nauseating row that commences with the first streak of daylight in every apartment and hotel room in the length and breadth of the U. S. A. Mechanical devices can set up an ear-splitting racket, but for me, every other possible sound pales into insignificance compared with this human hawking orgy. At first, in my ignorance, I imagined that my room must be situated next to some unfortunate asthmatics, and so, without comment, I tactfully requested that my room be changed. But if my first neighbors were asthmatic, my next were incurable chest victims. For, as my ears became more sensitive, the sound grew steadily worse. I changed my hotel not once, but several times, but it was all in vain, and very soon I discovered that it was something that had to be endured, since it was an integral part of waking America. Just as the cock crows, the American

hawks, and the wide range of bass stomach tones that shatter the morning are truly astounding. Sometimes I wondered if in the privacy of their bedrooms, these lusty experts did not stretch their necks to giraffe proportions. For nothing it seemed with a neck less long could ever achieve such a long sustained roar before the horrid climax. I tried all ways to exclude the sound, but nothing was really effective. Cotton wool pads, stuffed into the ears, and the bath taps turned on full, helped a bit, but on the first unguarded moment, sure enough someone, either from above or below, would announce his awakening with a great stomach octave.

The most astounding thing is that the Americans themselves are totally unaware of this evil-sounding habit. When asked why it has to be so noisy and so public, they have to stop and remember just when they've ever heard anything of the sort. A New England professor whom I was visiting looked both surprised and perplexed when I broached the subject.

"Is it really so? But how very strange, and I've never noticed it."

Then by the dull flush that suddenly mounted his cheek, I knew that he was remembering his own morning ritual.

"A lot of dust here, you know," he went on, by way of explanation, "and the steam heat, too. Those hotel bedrooms get very hot."

"Yes, I suppose so," I murmured, in consideration of his obvious embarrassment. But secretly, I was thinking, what excellent use could be made of a good, London fog. With that black, penetrating vapor assailing nose, throat and chest at one time, America could make whoopee!

"And don't Englishmen ever clear their throats?" asked a doubting lady.

"I really don't know. I suppose they must," I answered thoughtfully. It was my turn to pause and remember. "But, I've never heard them. And certainly, not on the same, grand scale."

"Perhaps you have never listened," ventured the professor.

"It might be that, of course. On the other hand, they may have an oiling and greasing process that causes them to purr silently," I suggested.

"Well, now, that's an idea. I think you've got something there," he laughed. "We're a pretty wild lot, anyhow, I guess."

"Hardly wild. More individual, perhaps," I smiled politely.

But compared to London, New York does appear wild in many respects. In fact, to arrive direct from London, is like parting company with domestic animals and plunging pell-mell into the untamed jungle. And if you want to get to places you must fight. Talons hitherto unneeded must be sharpened and trimmed for action, particularly if your purse demands that you travel by bus, street car, and most of all, the subway. Here there are no softly spoken conductors to direct you, no courteous traffic directors to discipline the besieging mob at peak hours, and when a uniformed official does raise his voice, it's like the roar of an enraged lion, just as a thud from his gentle fist is likely to knock you speechless should you attempt to approach him whilst he is busy trying to grab several pairs of frantic arms and legs that insist upon boarding an already crowded train. Not that anyone heeds him, despite the punch and growl that goes into his job. For when the train screeches along the platform the waiting mob turns and seizes it as though it were an enemy fortification. The moment the doors swing open the fight is on. Everyone attempts to board it in a solid, fight-

ing block while the passengers inside struggle and scream using their last ounce of strength to maintain a foothold and avert being trampled to death. As for the disembarking passengers at main stations, I never saw any. What happens to them I can't imagine. Either they dissolve or stay wedged until such time as the train has yielded up a greater part of its human cargo.

To attempt to board a bus is an equally difficult task. For when these great and highly-powered vehicles, threading dexterously through a maze of traffic, do pause for a brief second at the curbside, they are instantly set upon in the same manner as a subway train. Elbows and knees come into action and it's a case of every man for himself. Then again, the street level presents an even greater menace to the would-be passenger, for the bus slips into the curbside only when it can possibly steer and honk a place for itself. Just as often, the pause is no more than a slowing down in a dense sea of oncoming traffic, and to try and get near it seems only possible with the aid of wings. But the average New Yorker has a way with him. He possesses an intrepid traffic sense that serves him even in the teeth of death, and like eels and ants the mob slithers and swarms past moving wheels and over bumper bars that block the way to the moving bus. Then if the bus doors should fail to open or slam to and refuse admittance, they will accomplish the return trip to the pavement in the same adept fashion. Under these circumstances talons and muscles are altogether insufficient. You must achieve the cunning of the jungle if you will travel with the herd.

To watch a bus in action at the busiest hours and to observe all of its tricks in operation is to be made aware of American efficiency. These fast-traveling conveyances, rattling across New York carrying as

many passengers and often more than a London bus, have two sets of automatic doors and the entire vehicle is a one-man job. Perched upon a high seat in the front, the driver is ensconced in a sort of look-out tower. This same man acts as ticket collector and at the same time operates the doors by automatic levers. He will also answer questions as to routes, etc., give change and announce by loud speaker, the stopping places. Meanwhile, his eyes are glued upon the scene before him; he dare not relax his vigilant watch even for a second. It would seem at times that he has eyes in his back as well, for with an unerring judgment the doors at the rear swing open always at the right moment. He appears to be doing a job that could adequately be shared among three and he does it so well that there is seldom a hitch or a moment's delay. For one thing, automatic doors act as a most effective "no" to even the most persistent traveler, and brute force avails you nothing against a locked door and a grim determined driver. As for the man himself, he is as precise as a robot and functions with the same automatic precision as the vehicle he controls.

The only thing that the driver heeds are the traffic signals and the piercing police whistle that accompanies each change of the red and green lights. These are the only disciplinarians of the road. Of other courtesies there are none. Life surges and pulsates at a maddening as well as a deafening rate. The police whistle, shrieking at every section is just one more addition to the seething bedlam. It can be heard even above the loud speakers that blare from every second doorway and in some instances roar down from the roof tops. Picture shows bellow their feature attractions. Vaudeville houses call aloud their hit numbers while shops are announcing bargains not to be missed. Eating houses shout out their

menus. Catch-penny devices of all and every description are posted at every step of the way. All these and others besides are being continuously roared at the passing stream of pedestrians.

Every street corner has its own particular novelty and so the excitement never wanes, never lets up, even for an instant. And the average New Yorker, swept along with the tide, knows no sense of repose. He is as tense and electric as the air that he breathes. The moment that his legs stop working, his jaws begin. This is his way of letting up. For whether you travel by train, bus, or street car, and watch the jabbed-in loads of weary, exhausted looking people, returning from work and play, you will notice that almost without exception, the white and colored folks alike are all chewing their way home. And the energy that is brought to this manner of relaxation is truly astounding. Chewing gum is their life force and their jaws work it with zest, while the weird grimaces and facial contortions that result from the exercises are strangely reminiscent of an active monkey house.

CHAPTER III

LINGO

A common language is a common bond when it is common enough to be understood. But English as it is spoken in New York is an entirely different vernacular. It has been transformed by an infinite variety of vowel sounds and added to and subtracted from until it has ceased to be English according to the home textbooks. I was very soon to discover that my tongue was as foreign in New York as New Yorkese was to me.

No one, for instance, is heard to say *yes*. In New Yorkese, it is "yep," "yea," "ya," "O. K.," "okydoke," and sometimes an indrawn hiss that sounds like nothing at all but which is meant as an indication of the affirmative. "No," has suffered similar changes and is "nope," "naw," or "na," and a strange nasal noise that sounds like "uh-uh," but which accompanied by a shake of the head you come to distinguish as another variation of no.

There are numerous idioms punctuating the language entirely peculiar to New Yorkese which must be studied and time taken to learn if you are to find your way about, and to know what is happening around you. New Yorkese cannot be described as bad English or even as an accented version. It is a different language. For while the fundamentals of English still remain, the vowels and consonants have undergone such a grueling series of gymnastics that they have been tortured out of recognition and the result is not only a complete distortion but something that can never be claimed as being identical or the same language. Just how strange this new tongue

can look is evidenced many times daily by newspaper heads. The sensational tabloid press with its news steaming hot from inexhaustible and mysterious sources puts out headlines that appear from the size of the print to be announcing news of a revolutionary nature. But no matter how inquisitive you may feel, it is utterly impossible to understand what they are meant to convey. Whereas if you were in France, Germany, Italy or even Arabia such posters could be solved with the aid of a national dictionary, there is no English dictionary yet printed that can give the solution to a headline such as this for example: "F. D. R. O. K.'s VET BILL." Translated into English, this means that President Roosevelt has given his approval to a bill concerning a bonus to veterans of past wars. Only time and study will elucidate the mysteries of this sort.

To add to the difficulties of the uninitiated English visitor are the names of some ordinary commodities. These, too, in many instances have been changed and the result can be most confusing. In fact, setting out to purchase quite a simple article often resembles a guessing contest in trying to make the salesman or clerk as he is known throughout America understand your needs.

"Can you tell me at which counter I can buy some cotton wool?" I inquired one day of a girl in Woolworth's.

"Carton—what?" she returned, blankly.

"Cotton wool, you know, ordinary cotton wool."

"Nope," she said at last with a firm snap of her jaw. "I guess we just don't carry anything like that around here." She was preparing to turn and leave me alone with my puzzle, but I refused to be disposed of so easily.

"Oh, but look here. That's absurd. You simply must have cotton wool somewhere in a place like this.

Can't you at least tell me where to find it?" I spoke as coaxingly as I knew how, but the look she turned on me proved beyond doubt that my request was gibberish to her.

"Say it again," she commanded. Most willingly I complied, and speaking very slowly this time I repeated—

"Cotton wool. You know, soft white fluffy stuff. I want it to use for my face."

A pitying know-all sort of smile touched her lips as leaning over the counter she planked down a jar of face cream before me.

"Oh, no," I sighed. "I don't need face cream. Surely you must know what cotton wool is," or didn't she? I was beginning to wonder myself. Could it be due to my accent or was it known by another name? I racked my brain for an alternative. I tried "wadding," "padding" but it was no use. In fact, the more I deviated from the original, the more baffled she became.

"Carton wool," she went mumbling down the counter. "I can't figure out what it is you're after."

By this time my patience was wearing thin. Somewhere in this store I was convinced was what I needed. And by some means or another, I was determined to get it.

"Oh, this is really too ridiculous. I'm quite sure that you have it," I began once more, but this time on a note that revealed my irritation, and with my change of tone, the girl's expression altered. Quite clearly she suddenly felt that she was dealing with a lunatic—one that it was best to humor. With a maudlin kind of smile that is usually handed out to imbeciles, she grabbed a bundle of steel wool and pushed it at me persuasively.

"Here, take this. This is what you want," she grinned sweetly.

"It's nothing of the sort," I said brusquely, pushing it aside and not without a sense of wounded vanity. Steel wool to clean my face, indeed! I must have turned scarlet with indignation and thus provided her with further evidence of dangerous tendencies, for she dived away only to return immediately with an assortment of darning wools. These she dangled before me rather as though she were hoping to pacify a mad dog with a bone. She sought to thrust them upon me despite my expostulations to the contrary.

"Cotton wool is not darning wool," I cried heatedly, "and whatever you may think about it I do not intend to sew my face."

At this point a floor supervisor appeared on the scene, and with a despairing gesture she beckoned him over. Her voice rose on a shrill, hysterical note while her manner plainly indicated that I was "nuts!"

"Here, see how you can make out. I've tried all ways to figure out what it is she's after, but what the heck it is I don't know!" With that, she turned on her heels and fled.

Perhaps it was my sudden laugh that prompted him to pass me a wary look. He must have felt that only the utmost tact would steer me safely out of the store and hold in check the lurking tendency of madness that the saleswoman's look had obviously communicated. Fixing me with a grave, suspicious eye, he took me by the arm to a clearer space and begged me in a soothing voice to try and tell him just what it was that I wanted.

Cotton wool had become an *idée fixe* by now. I talked so much about it that I could see nothing else. I was determined not to leave the store without it. Besides which, being treated as a lunatic was having

its effect. I was beginning to doubt my own reason. Once again I embarked on a detailed preamble rallying every descriptive term that I could to my aid and at last I was rewarded by a gleam of comprehension dawning in the listener's eye.

"Tell me," he said, stroking his chin meditatively. "Do doctors use it?"

"Most certainly they do," I cried. "And everyone else, too, that I know of." The universal part of the sentence seemed to throw him off the scent a little, for he wagged a cautionary finger begging me to take things gently.

"And hospitals—do they use it?"

"Why, of course. By the cartload," I returned jubilantly. But he was not to be rushed off his feet.

"Does it come in long, blue strips?" He stretched his arms to their full extent while his chin turned into a question mark.

"Oh, no, it's white," I corrected. Then suddenly I recalled the familiar blue wrappings and manner of packing, and realized that at last he really was on the right scent.

"It's usually rolled in blue paper," I nodded.

"This way, then," he said, turning on a firm dictatorial heel. I kept as close to him as I possibly could, fighting my way through the people and popping round counter after counter until at last we came to the end of the store. There, lo and behold, was a table stacked as high as a mountain with cotton wool, and crowned above it was a huge ten-cent price ticket. All this trouble and bother for a ten-cent purchase. I almost had the grace to be ashamed. However, before I had time to seize the package, he was already waving a bundle at me.

"Is this what you want?"

"Why, of course it is," I cried grabbing the pack-

age as though I had set hands upon a long-lost friend. "It's exactly it. Why on earth it should have taken you so long to understand me, I can't imagine. I was sure you had cotton wool."

"That is not 'carton wool,' " he snarled menacingly. "That, ma'am, is absorbent carton, and we don't carry 'carton wool' here."

A similar experience was mine trying to purchase a reel of cotton. There was a day when my imagination failed to yield up an alternative name and I consulted my Oxford dictionary but when that too failed to enlighten me, I spent a miserable time running up and down a long counter at Macy's department store pleading with girl after girl in a desperate effort to secure a simple reel of white cotton. It was not until I finally plucked a thread from my dress and actually got down to demonstrations that the salesgirl, her patience stretched to a breaking point, suddenly hit on the right idea and brought out the desired article.

"It's a spool of thread you want, I guess," she said pertly, and in a voice that was laden with contempt for my ignorance.

"I guess it is," I nodded meekly, but squirming inwardly at the feeling of utter stupidity that possessed me. It is exactly the same sensation as when a very simple puzzle has been painfully explained and the smirking conjurer treats you to a homily on its simplicity and you, grinning and feeling an utter fool, are bound to agree.

But until you have learned to speak American, similar experiences await you at every turn. Quite soon you discover that all shops, regardless of their size, are stores, and that markets are large provision shops where all food commodities are purchased; that biscuits as we know them in the old familiar tins are cookies, while biscuits are something quite differ-

ent. These are a mixture of batter baked in the oven and served hot with butter and usually accompanied by a cup of coffee. Sweets are candies and so on. The list is interminable. The same things are obtainable and with names that really are equally good. It's simply that the new titles are confusing at first.

"Thank you" is not an expression that is overworked in America. In fact, the average New Yorker, competing in the hustle and bustle of daily life, has more or less deleted it from his vocabulary. A waitress, for instance, may clear and set a place for a man at the table, fetch him his inevitable glass of water, hang up his hat and coat, produce the menu, hurry back with a piping hot dish of food—in short, do all but eat it for him, and he will show his appreciation by burying his head in his plate with never so much as a glance at the person rendering the service. The courteous acknowledgment of "thank you" is not missed simply because it is not customary, and so to use it constantly, according to the British habit, not only occasions some surprise, but it also has a way of entangling you in a long exchange of attenuated courtesies. My first "thank you" to a waitress in one of Child's Fifth Avenue Restaurants brought forth a smiling and totally unexpected "You're welcome," which immediately seemed to nullify my "thank you," and since the girl remained smilingly by, something else was definitely needed to round off the conversation.

"How nice," I murmured a trifle awkwardly.

"Don't mention it," came back the prompt rejoinder to which I felt my lips framing still another "thank you." But I managed to bite it back and forthwith buried my head in my plate following as closely as possible the American example.

It has taken me a long time to shed a life-long custom, or something I would prefer to consider an innate sense of courtesy, but in the U. S. A. too many thanks are, like too many cooks, apt to spoil the broth. Unexpected as they are, the American has a disconcerting way of popping the lid on your remark with something equally surprising of his own. In the mid-west, a word of thanks will immediately evoke a spirited "you bet!" which away from a race course or a gaming table, leaves you in mid-air with nothing left to say. Down south, where charm and courtesy have not yet been ousted by speed, "thank you" seems to fall on gentler understanding, and invariably the remark will provoke a smiling and softly drawn out, "Yee-es, ma'am."

For the most part, Americans have reserved the expression as a strictly personal acknowledgment. If you should praise his hat or his house, compliment a woman on her dress or a man on his new appointment, the response will be an immediate, "Oh, thank you." On the other hand, services rendered by the great working public in shops, offices, restaurants and the like are taken for granted and therein lies one of the strange anomalies of a great democracy.

"Date" is a word that occupies much prominence in the American vocabulary, and it is unlikely when you first hear it being bandied back and forth in conversation, that you will accede it either its correct definition or its rightful importance. You're quite likely to think of fruit, battles, documents, an old-fashioned hat, or even a period piece of furniture, but "date" means nothing of the sort. Dates to the American girl mean the barometer of her social success and a girl that does lots of dating is a creature of envy in the eyes of her less fortunate sisters, and she also ranks high in the social reckoning.

"I dated him for months," simply means that two people of opposite sex have been meeting constantly, just as "dates to burn" means that a girl's men friends are legion and that she is inundated with invitations to lunch, dine and dance and is having a busy time picking and choosing between suitors and marking up the appointed time on her calendars.

There are also numerous kinds of dates—such as "blind dates," "coke dates," "hot dates," and "late dates." Each has its own definition which time and study eventually clarifies. A blind date means to go out with a man whom you don't know, usually an arrangement made by a friend to oblige. A "coke" date is a college term familiar among students, "coke" being the abbreviation for Coca-Cola, which is the national soft drink. A cheap meeting, in other words, costing a nickel a glass. "Hot" date has a more juicy definition with a wink attached. It's a man's way of indicating a promising evening with his lady friend. A late date is the girl who has the wit to spend a part of the evening with one man and get back in time to fool another.

It seems to me that if American and English are to be treated as the same language, it is quite time that a new dictionary were compiled, one that incorporates the many alternative names that have been given to everyday commodities. Such a book would not only be a priceless boon to travelers, but it might quite easily succeed in promoting more neighborly relations between the two peoples.

CHAPTER IV

BROADWAY

Broadway, or "the great white way" as it is more spectacularly called, immediately conjures up a picture of a glittering thoroughfare, and so it is. An avenue of gaiety mounted in electricity, blazing with signs daringly illuminated and so lavishly spangled that the stars of heaven creep timidly away to a less competitive scene. Advertisements of bewildering size and hue dazzle the eyes and chief among them dances the name of Wrigley's. The famous chewing gum sign dominates all else and assumes such monstrous proportions that the jaws of New York open in response. Across the sky travels a blazing, white ribbon with tomorrow's news told in arresting captions. Gilded picture palaces, tawdry by day, at night become crustations of glitter against the darkening sky and Hollywood's best known names are so festooned in colored lights that the whole galaxy of stars have tumbled to the sidewalks.

By night "the great white way" is thronged with a jostling, swaying mob of people. At times it is a solid block so that to walk even at a snail's pace is utterly impossible. The best that can be managed is a slow crawl, prodded along by the crowd milling behind and stumbling over those in front. Seen through British eyes, the scene is totally unfamiliar. Both the atmosphere and the people appear strangely different. For the New Yorker is a type completely his own—a hybrid of many nationalities. As you become better acquainted with the United

States, you realize that he represents the real American less and less. He can best be described as the cosmopolitan element or the New York provincialism of a great nation. Among the sea of faces thronging Broadway by night there is little evidence of the Teuton. Rather they comprise a potent mixture of Slav and Latin. A new race has emerged and one that displays a peculiar strength. They are keen-faced looking people for the most part with sharp, dark eyes that give an impression of high-pitched, nervous virility brittle enough to snap if the electric current were turned on.

And success walks with them, if appearance counts for everything. The women are pert, sure and as glossy as paint itself, perfect examples of meticulous grooming. Not that morning ever finds them looking differently, for when you meet them breakfasting at an early hour, imbibing the national drink of orange juice, the American women commence the day with the same unimpaired gloss that they wore the night before. I've often wondered if they spend the night wrapped in cellophane and employ careful hands to extricate them next morning. For how else they preserve their flawless, unruffled glow is difficult to imagine. And on Broadway by night, when the bright lights focus on the fashion parade, the women put on an unrivaled spic and span show. Eyes and lips are curved by cunning fingers and clothes express the very latest vagaries of style. Figures are molded to a nicety and appear to be poured into garments that reveal rather better than they conceal. Alert eyes dart about massive fur collars while fur coats swagger by in such lavish profusion that your thoughts and sympathies instantly fly to the animals in the polar regions who must surely be feeling the pinch of vandalism. Heads that are

works of plastic art with every hair scrupulously accounted for are crowned by dashing, jaunty hats. Slim of ankle and perfectly shod, the ladies of Broadway complement their men who in turn present a moving picture of the nipped-in-waisted examples that fill the custom tailor shop windows.

All in all, "the great white way" provides a picture that is not unlike a giant marionette show. Perhaps it is due to an atmosphere that reeks of artificiality, that the people likewise reflect unreality. And it is easy to imagine them having been dressed by craftsmen and dropped on the scene where, controlled by myriad strings and expert hands, they are performing a dumb show against a vast glittering curtain.

A contrasting touch of realism is supplied by the night peddler, a lynx-eyed fellow who worms his way in and out of the inattentive throng and persistently shoves his wares at every likely purchaser. All kinds of strange merchandise are for sale, from the most fantastic novelty to the ordinary brand of shoe laces. Tirelessly he shouts his wares and contrives all manner of ways to attract attention. Ever so often a pertinent face, sharpened by experience, wily as a fox, will loom up close to you, while in a voice that is harsh with wear, he will rasp out the merits of his goods.

"'Ere, ma'am, get an eyeful of this. A real dandy straight from gay Paree and no kidding. All for two bits, Ma'am."

One interesting feature of the night peddler is the amazing way in which he has trained his senses to serve him separately and at the same time. For while he pushes his tray at you and brings all the guile he possesses to aid his sale, he never spares you so much as a glance. His eyes are already busy

scanning the oncoming crowd and selecting his next possibility. He knows by instinct whether or not you are a likely customer and even before you have had time to mumble "no" he has sensed the reply and darted off into the crowd to shove his tray and tell his story to the next prospect. Meanwhile, his eyes are focused ahead seeming to see everything and everyone. And with nimble and unerring judgment, he will pick out the strangers like plucking plums from a Christmas pudding.

Such is Broadway by night—or at least a small portion of it. For Times Square, which is the actual section that is named "the great white way," only extends for about half a mile.

Broadway proper is a long thoroughfare which cuts across the island of Manhattan some fifteen miles. Every inch of the way has been keenly developed and commercialized to the fullest extent. But as Broadway winds riverwise on its course through the city, its aspect changes many times.

Commencing at the Southern tip of the Island in the financial section of New York it passes through Wall Street, the famous money mart and stock exchange area. Here the ticker tape, the most sensitive barometer in existence of world conditions, provides a shrine for millionaires and stock gamblers alike and here, day after day, the faithful ones meet to watch with bated breath the vagaries of chance. One man's fortune becomes another's ruin as the tape reveals the almighty march of the dollar. Calculating with grim exactness, it ticks out cold fabulous facts that defy human reckoning. "The moving finger writes, and having writ, moves on." Perhaps Omar Khayyam, with true prophetic insight had the ticker tape in mind when he penned his famous lines, for neither despair nor entreaty can

“lure it back or wipe out a word of it.” The march of dollars goes on, rising and falling, a continuous, fateful ribbon. Yet despite the glamor of fortune and the enveloping mantle of wealth, the atmosphere of Broadway’s financial section is sombre. The weight of dollars has cast a gloom over the place and the crowds teeming along the streets wear preoccupied expressions of glazed intentness. Time means money in Wall Street and people pass each other heedlessly, groping in breathless haste and blind, apparently, to all existence. Even the buildings look grim as though they too were conscious of the seriousness of money making. Their ears are turned inwards, minding with solemn secrecy the hazardous bids enacted within their walls. This part of Broadway does not smile. It is too busy pursuing the gilded promises of chance.

But as Broadway continues north, it takes a more romantic turn into Greenwich Village. This is the Bohemian quarter, tinged somewhat with the color of Montmartre, where artists in their many guises are wont to foregather. By night it takes on a rollicking air of gaiety and in and out of the cosmopolitan restaurants and night clubs that cater to the pleasure seekers passes many a great name of tomorrow and a host of yesterday’s successes. Fun, frolic, stoicism and stark tragedy comprise the pattern of Greenwich Village, but for all that, it shows a brave face to the world. There is an element of excitement in the atmosphere that has little to do with the gaily lighted places of entertainment and still less with the glamorous crowds. It has all to do with the hope that springs eternal in the breasts of creative artists. For hope rides high in Greenwich Village and the air is pregnant with the invincible quality of faith and idealism girding the soul of the

artist. And it is that which outshines the glitter of the tinsel. Poets, playwrights, painters and musicians mingle among the crowd, laughing their way and trusting in tomorrow. For all the tragedy that Greenwich Village encounters, it is still light-hearted—a center of artistic experiment, impregnated with the constant sifting of new and original endeavors.

Hard on the heels of the Village comes the garment manufacturing sector where **READY MADE AMERICA** is cut, shaped and stamped with the manufacturer's seal. This stretch of Broadway presents a positive hive of industry, with factory after factory turning out garments at high pressure. Workers swarm like ants and buyers and salesmen are in constant conclave. Engineers have invented machines that gobble up limitless rolls of material and fashion it into clothes according to the dictates of the designer. Regarding dress, feminine America has been utterly spoiled. With the change of the seasons, she is never called upon to use her imagination in the slightest degree. All dress problems are carefully solved for her by efficient experts. There are people whose business it is to study the trend of fashion, forecast styles, design and decide on what is exactly suitable for all on every occasion. They blend colors and styles and see to it that rack after rack is filled with dresses in sizes to fit every figure. Even those who have suffered from a caprice of nature and bulge where they ought to curve, need never despair. There is always a garment to fit them.

There is no particular credit due to the American woman who emerges with a new season's outfit looking like the latest bulletin from Paris, no justification whatsoever for her to preen herself unduly. She has every right to look that way. Hers is the simplest task—nothing more, in fact, than walking into a

store, stating her size, rummaging through thousands and thousands of styles until she is satisfied. And what's more, whatever she chooses will fit her. Shopping in America is kindergarten work, and considering that the American woman devotes three-quarters of her time to her appearance, she has precious little excuse for not presenting a gratifying look of fashionable elegance. It would be interesting to see if she could maintain a like standard of style if she were turned loose to fend for herself in England where ready-made clothes of the less expensive variety are a travesty of style and fit. How would her imagination serve her if, for instance, she were surrounded with dresses that revealed about as much shape as an ill-fitting night gown and with a softly-spoken saleswoman purring into her ear:

"It fits you perfectly, Modom! A slight alteration of course," while she does her best to grab enough of the garments out of sight to clothe at least two more. It is possible that under such circumstances, feminine America's standard of elegance would decline and like her less fashionable sister on the other side of the Atlantic, she would give up the struggle and take to wearing—just clothes. But so long as the garment manufacturing center continues to pour out fashion with the same agility as a gas pump and is animated by an army of creative dress designers, then American women will continue to strut the styles, and spread their feathers. They owe that much to the people who do their thinking for them.

Passing Times Square, already described as the most glittering spot under the wide heavens, and continuing less than a mile to the north, Broadway comes to a densely residential area. On either side, it is flanked by street after street of tightly-wedged apartment buildings, the equivalent of an English

block of flats. Residential hotels boasting a mere three to five hundred rooms, overrun the streets like weeds. In this part of New York, literally tens of thousands of people are housed, for the average New Yorker has been trained, like the performing flea, to accommodate himself in a minimum of space.

There is nothing in England that quite compares with an American one-room apartment. It is a veritable box of tricks. Into a few square cubic feet, are packed every domestic device as well as all the latest appointments of a six-room villa. There is a bed which lets down by night and crawls back into the woodwork by day, a cupboard which cunningly conceals a cooking stove that is intimately wedded to a frigidaire. Another door which looks like the entrance to a conservatory hides the bathroom and all its modern conveniences. Doors litter the landscape and blot out all that is unsightly. One conceals a vast closet that is often deep enough to swallow all your luggage. Another supports a performing ironing board that folds up neatly when it is not in use, and behind another portal resides a small pantry where pots, pans and dishes are housed. Hot and cold water are yours by day and night for the turn of a tap and a steam heat system, continuously working, warms the entire building and keeps you simmering gently like a pot of stew over a medium gas. If the New Yorker is denied space, he is nevertheless lushed in comfort and convenience. His one-room apartment caters to all his residential needs.

This residential section of Broadway is also a highly competitive shopping center, where commodities of every conceivable description catch the eye. Dress shops, luxury furs, shoes, food and furniture flood the way and arrest attention, and it is here in this thickly populated and what appears to be a very

prosperous neighborhood that one of the strangest human phenomena occurs.

Into this portion of Broadway each sunny morning (and New York has a liberal quota of sun) are wheeled hundreds of babies for their daily outing. The pavements are wide and mothers and nurses bringing with them small adjustable chairs park themselves in line in front of the shop windows. Muffled up in fur coats, they spread themselves out to the morning sunshine with the same air of careless nonchalance as do nurses with children in English parks and along the beach promenade. The babies turn their eyes to the road and gaze out upon a scene of rumbling street cars, buses and a ceaseless honking flow of motor traffic. The air is balmy with gas fumes, to say nothing of the falling smuts from the surrounding highly-fired furnaces that drop like a gentle dew from heaven. Bricks and mortar, noise, dirt and motor fuels, yet so long as the sun shines, the women and babies sit along the pavement, gazing before them as serenely as though they were parked along a sapphire lake.

In my ignorance, I thought that I had stumbled upon a baby show, a novel pavement exhibition, perhaps. Diffidently, I approached a more benign looking parent and asked if my surmise were correct.

"Baby show, my eye," she snapped with a dark look of suspicion.

"Then what is the reason," I asked, "for bringing all of these babies here this morning? Isn't it rather unusual? I'm a visitor here," I trailed off apologetically.

"You don't say," her lip curled sarcastically. "Unusual, nothing. Maybe where you come from babies don't get air and sunshine, but here they get it, see?" With that she piled the covers high over

her charge, and pulled up the shade as though she felt that it were likely to contract pneumonia from my chill breath of criticism.

Broadway's baby show on fine days is one of the most amazing spectacles this ultra-modern city has to offer. Warmly wrapped in expensive fur rugs, the children sit still and snug in their beautifully sprung perambulators and look out with wondering eyes upon a sea of intense commercialism. From their tenderest moments, they know only the sounds of mechanism and the shade of skyscrapers.

Watching them, I wondered how these same children would react if they were suddenly transplanted to healthful green surroundings, far removed from the din of commerce. Is it possible that the song of the birds would hold any magic for them? Would they discover joy in a blue sea and wide green fields? Or is it true that this new race, born of an industrial age, derives its music from the incessant honkings of automobiles and the shrill grinding of brakes? Truth seems to point that way. For less than five minutes' walk away from this spot lies Central Park, where nature does its best to achieve a show. There is not a wealth of grass certainly, but what there is is green. And there are also trees and birds, and a quantity of very tame and friendly squirrels, furry little creatures, with tails like question marks who are always ready to scamper to your shoulders for a nut. Also, there is a well-equipped zoo to which the public is admitted free of charge. All this, and yet so many of these mothers, living on the west side of Manhattan, prefer to rear their children on a crowded and dirty pavement.

CHAPTER V

EATING

"You're in luck," said an English friend of mine when he heard that I was about to sail for America. "The most amusing country and the things those Yanks can do with food is positively astounding. I was only there once for a short time, but I well remember some of the most delectable dishes that I ever tasted. You will have to keep a careful eye on your waistline," he teased. "All those ice cream things they dish up, you know. Innocuous sounding affairs, and devilish on the figure." A pink tongue licked his lips as he talked, and the envy in his voice was reflected on his round, red face that was a genuine product of the roast beef and Yorkshire pudding of old England.

That a generous amount of respect is due to the staple diet of a great Empire is not to be gainsaid. In fact, it approaches high treason to speak lightly of the food that has raised millions of stalwart sons, and it might easily be responsible for the *sang froid* and sterling quality of restraint for which the English are justly famed and which is the obvious envy of our lesser disciplined and highly charged American neighbors.

But away from the shores of Britain there are no people on earth who will shed their culinary obligations with greater zest than the English. They delight in new dishes and will lap up with relish any tempting morsel that is set before them. Everything is worth trying once, from frogs to clams. But

when after a thoroughly good beano, the Englishman's stomach begins to rebel, he will turn his face homewards, roundly damning those foreign concoctions and firmly avowing that there is nothing like good English food to keep a man fit, and with the English Channel separating him from further temptation, he is safe in the conviction that whatever national disaster might befall, his roast beef and rump steak will remain inviolate. His kitchen, at least, is safe from foreign invasion. It's the one thing that "can't happen here."

Being English, I know from long experience that confronted with a rib of beef there seems nothing else to do with it but pop it into the oven. Not only does imagination desert you, but courage also. There may be other ways of treating it. Mrs. Beeton, for instance, has a host of suggestions. But for some reason or other distrust creeps in, the beef cries aloud for the oven and to turn a deaf ear to its entreaty is like offering a slight to the prime cattle that have trustingly chewed the cud for centuries. So into the oven it goes, but not before it has whispered a gentle reminder not to forget to beat up a batter for the Yorkshire!

There was a time when I wondered if the anatomy of the American cattle could possibly be the same as the English, for none of them, it seemed, owned regular ribs or rumps, while they in turn possessed peculiar sounding parts hitherto unheard of. My first inquiry for a wing-rib of beef caused the butcher's brow to pucker in perplexity.

"Wing-rib," he mused. "Never heard of it. No, ma'am, I guess we don't have it."

"I want it to roast," I added, hoping to elucidate the apparent mystery.

"Ah, well now," he beamed as though he had suddenly seen the light. "Now we're getting some place. How would you like a nice chuck?"

It was a startling turn of phrase to say the least, and it was only by his pointing enthusiastically to an unrecognizable looking joint marked "chuck roast" that I knew he was not about to leap the counter and dig me in the ribs. Declining his offer, I tried my luck to secure some rump steak.

"Ah don't have it, no, ma'am." His head shook discouragingly. "We don't butcher the meats same way 'round here, I guess. That's rare meat you're asking for, and we roll it up for roast."

"Then what do you do with the ribs?" I cried anxiously. For hearing that rump steak was rolled up, I was prepared to hear that England's national cut was flung to the dogs.

"Well, now, I guess we make T-bone steaks out of it. Best in the world for broiling, ma'am, best in the world." He held one up by the tail for my inspection, and began to swing it before my eyes as though daring me to contradict. I was too discouraged to say more, and not having the least idea what broiling might mean, I told him to wrap it up and went home to puzzle out the best I could at exactly what spot my T-bone had served the animal in life. But try as I would, I could not decide whether it was head or tail. And with broiling, to confuse me still further, I suspiciously cut it into dice, threw it into a stew pot, and hoped for the best. Since then, however, I have discovered that broiling is but another word for grilling, and that T-bone steaks are every bit as good, if not better, than the standard English rump.

Americans do not suffer with a roast beef complex. It is possible to imagine that measures were taken to

guard against it at the outset by jointing beasts into odd shapes that positively defy the oven, for there certainly is a sort of "roast me at your peril" expression on all the meat for sale. It is also a fact that American cooks have proved with delicious results that there is many a worthier fate for the joint than the oven.

Food in America is quite differently treated. Just as with American clothes, imagination plays a large and important part; as a result meals have been revolutionized instead of standardized. The American is a very thorough-going person and so bristling with efficiency that there are moments when his passion for tabulating detail fills you with a hopeless sense of incompetence. Loose ends seem to scatter in the breeze compared to the Yank who treats all practical things with scientific precision. Scientists, for instance, have approached the food question and afforded it the same grave and careful study as went into the planning of the Panama Canal. Calories and vitamins have been balanced to perfection, and in consequence, the menu of America is not only scientifically planned, but is also invested with infinite variety. Even the most jaded appetite can be sure of finding something enticing.

With the exclusion of ice cream, ice water and fruit juices, there is no dish that can be labeled as a staple diet. The American people themselves are too mixed and their tastes too divergent to agree with enthusiasm over any particular dish. So many nationalities have each contributed their different food cultures and the whole have been cast pell-mell into the American stock-pot which, blended together, have produced a very savory brew. Delectable flavors, culled from all corners of the earth, permeate the menus and provide the rich touch of va-

riety that has earned America its reputation for exciting and interesting food.

A praiseworthy feature is that a well-balanced and tasty meal need not be costly. New York, like every other large city throughout the United States, is liberally spattered with restaurants guaranteed to suit all purses. You can also indulge your mood at no extra charge. Should you care to be French, you can find a French restaurant. Or if Italian pleases you more, there is one for you. Likewise German, Swedish, Russian, Chinese, Japanese, or Jewish. For a very nominal sum you can indulge whatsoever epicurean fancy is yours.

England in this respect compares lamentably, particularly in the provincial and country towns where an inexpensive meal is about as inspiring as a November fog. You can tramp the streets, and still find nothing more appetizing than the eternal roast and two veg, steak and kidney pudding, a minced potato pie, or a jaundiced egg on toast, and all tasting even worse than they sound. Except for the advent of knives and forks, the English menu has seen little variation since the days of Henry VIII.

Pages could be written about the American salad. Piquant and of infinite variety, an individual salad graces all meals and at no additional cost. It appears on your right hand like a freshly picked bunch, straight out of a luscious spring garden. It has nothing whatsoever in common with the floating lettuce leaf bidding a protracted farewell to a feverish piece of beetroot, so reminiscent of home. American salads are as crisp and glowing as nature itself. The lettuce, a stalwart-hearted affair, is decked high with delicious morsels of tempting relish and so artistically arranged that disturbance seems a sacrilege. They look just right to be hung on the wall and

exhibited as perfect studies of still life. Everything but the kitchen stove goes in to their composition—fish, fowl, meats and all the fruits of the earth. There is avocado pear for those of more exotic taste, and fluffy mounds of white cottage cheese, artfully decorated with sliced peaches. Sometimes a whole pear shimmers through a fine green mint jelly and rising from a bed of lettuce looks for all the world like an iridescent pearl from a Rajah's collection. Pineapple, grapefruit, finely chopped nuts, fresh shrimp, asparagus, chopped pimento, are but a few of the delicacies that supplement the more ordinary salad ingredients.

But by way of contrast, a good comfortable cup of tea is not to be got from end to end of the United States. Ever since the famed Boston "tea party," the American has had little regard for tea and treats it with a thinly veiled contempt. An order for tea in a restaurant invariably provokes raised eyebrows on the part of the waitress while she repeats "tea" after you as though to infer that she must have made a mistake, and the look of withering scorn that follows when you weakly assure her that tea is really what you want is enough to cause you to slide under the table in shame. No matter when or where you may order tea, you can be quite sure that it will be nothing like the kind you had in mind. At its best, it looks as though it had been brewed from seaweed, and pale to a state of pernicious anemia—you are fearful to lay hands on it lest it should collapse entirely. For some reason or other, Americans have never cultivated the simple art of tea-making. Their idea of a pot of tea is a jug of tepid water, with a little white linen bag containing the tea, made fast to the handle with a piece of string as a curb to pilferers, and looking exactly like it had just arrived

home from the laundry. This you drop into the water and poke about as viciously as you know how and wait for the water to change color. Then when you have had your turn, I suspect that the bag, with tea intact, goes straight back to the laundry to be mangled out, ironed and made ready for the next customer.

A cup of coffee is the usual demand among Americans, and of course, water. This they swallow by the gallon. However much the American may neglect his outside, his inside is definitely washed clean. There is nothing of the camel in his make-up, for he starts the day on ice water and continues to gulp it down at regular intervals. Exactly where he manages to stow it all is an everlasting mystery. Sometimes I wonder if in his secret and innermost parts he floats goldfish. Water has never to be asked for. The very sight of you entering an eating place will immediately produce a glass of water. It is offered before the menu and even before you are seated, and no sooner has one glassful disappeared on its secret journeys than a hand shoots out and refills the glass. This internal hosing process continues all through the meal, for the American never permits a single flavor to remain with him. Everything is chased down by a good swig of water. Even a dinner party is not immune to this ritual. You can serve a man a most delectable meal, spend hours preparing savory courses, congratulate yourself on having dished up an excellent repast, and he will compliment you by tinkling a glass of ice water in his right hand and carefully washing down each mouthful of food. Then to be sure that not a trace of coffee and liquor should linger with him, he takes a long, last drink as though it were the best thing he ever tasted. How

on earth he saves himself from drowning, is one of nature's mysteries.

At table, the American handles a knife as though it were a dangerous weapon. He uses it with the utmost caution, and only when compelled. He picks it up, when his meal is set before him, rather as though he expected it to turn and slay him. Very gingerly he will cut up a small portion of food and hurriedly put it away to one side while he stumbles round his plate with the aid of his fork stabbing at pieces of food and looking for all the world like a one-armed park attendant forking up stray pieces of paper after the picnic. His knife comes into use several times for the purpose of careful snippings, but is always fearfully disposed of again. The fork is his standby, and he has developed considerable skill in its use. It does service for everything—sweets included. I have not learned how to transfer safely a slippery dessert from the plate without losing a great part of it between the prongs. But dessert spoons are not considered a table appointment. So that when you find yourself confronted with a dish of floating fruit or a wobbly pile of jelly, and you are forced by sheer incompetence to beg a dessert spoon, you are likely to land yourself in a long, humiliating plea of description. Anything from a soup spoon to a teaspoon may be handed to you, accompanied by a frozen stare that implies these "god-damned foreigners ask for the craziest things!" Fish knives are also an unknown quantity, and here again the fork alone accomplishes the clean-up trick. Practice of course, makes perfect, and it is possible to assume that given time your right arm will develop all the adroitness of a one-armed bandit.

Unless curbed from the start, ice cream sodas are likely to become a vice. I was immune until a friend

from Europe, hearing that I had not yet tasted one, threw up her arms in amazement and dragged me forthwith to a drug store.

"Why, you've simply got to try one!" she cried. "You have no idea what you're missing. They're the best things in America. I have one every day, and when no one's looking, much oftener." And once initiated, I, too, quickly fell a victim. For weeks afterwards, I could not pass a drug store without hankering for an ice cream soda. Time and again I climbed up at the counter, cast a guilty look around as though I were about to steal a pot of jam, then went zealously through the long list of flavors to make sure if there could possibly be one that was as yet unsampled. Exactly what is the secret of its success is difficult to define. But it is true that an ice cream soda can taste as fragrant as a June rose and fill you with all the heady sensations of a perfect summer day. Or it can be as rich and toothsome as butterscotch straight out of Edinburgh. Whether it is the flavoring, the ice cream, the scientific mixing, or all three, I don't profess to know. The secret belongs to the U. S. A. and nowhere else in the world is an ice cream soda the same delicious treat. It's no wonder that the American refreshes himself with copious drafts several times daily. The only marvel is how he preserves his waistline.

All in all, eating in America is a gastronomic adventure and one that never grows dull. The one disadvantage is that, cursed with an indulgent palate and with feasting a constant temptation, the figure is likely to slip out of control. Any curves that you may secretly cherish will very soon commence to bulge. Time and again I have ruefully recalled the cautionary advice of my English friend—"you will

have to watch your waistline." And if vanity is your boon companion, then—

But when I think of his rosy red cheeks, telling so eloquently of roast beef and "two veg," I console myself with the thought that the weight scale has always been a notorious liar.

CHAPTER VI

UNHOLY WEDLOCK

My first sidelight on American mass marriages came from a little five-year-old girl who lived in an apartment on the floor above. When Florence was short of a playmate, she would often present herself at my door and inquire in a very grown-up fashion if I would care for her to come in and talk with me for a while.

At first her company placed me somewhat at a loss, since I could not make up my mind exactly how to treat her. She was not like any child that I had ever encountered, for there was nothing childish about her. Florence was a sophisticated little miss who seemed to have been born grown up.

"How pretty you look, Florence!" I greeted her one morning when she appeared looking neatly starched and ironed.

"I know it," came the pert reply. Then seating herself primly down for a chat she informed me that her playmate wasn't feeling so good today.

"Guess this cold has gotten into him. This weather is awful mean."

Quite plainly childish conversation was out of place here. Florence was a worldly little creature who demanded worldly exchanges. My main attraction for her, apart from the odd chocolates and biscuits that she collected, was my English accent. She would never be convinced that I was English because, as she constantly told me, I didn't speak it right. Her new Daddy was English. He spoke like

regular folk. Florence, who had apparently confided her doubts to Daddy, had been warned not to be taken in by a stranger.

"She's just kidding you," Daddy had told her, and Florence, as it seemed, was bent on making me own up.

As well as being startlingly frank, Florence was always full of curiosity. She wished to know the whys and wherefores of everything that she saw. And one day, when she happened into my room and found me packing to leave New York, she immediately had to know why I was going and where?

"Chicago," I told her. "Do you know where it is?"

"Sure I know it. One of my Daddies lives there. Mummy doesn't know whether he's dead or alive, but I know that he went to Chicago."

"One of your Daddies, Florence!" I cried in amazement. "What on earth do you mean? How many Daddies have you got?"

"I don't know exactly, a few I guess."

I thought that this time Florence was kidding me, but as I afterwards discovered, Florence's mother was one of New York's famous divorcees. She was still under forty and Florence's present Daddy was her sixth husband. The case had been greatly publicized and each of the lady's "scalps" graphically illustrated. It transpired that everyone in the hotel but me knew of these romances.

The American press always pays special attention to divorce, and a much married madam is flouted abroad for everyone to gloat over. No detail is withheld or considered too naughty to be dramatized and spicily recorded with a true Rabelaisian touch. A lady with a row of husbands is always hot news. Her triumphs are publicized, accompanied by an entire

picture gallery with numbers one, two, three, four and so on. For this reason, America has gained for itself a very spurious reputation where marriage is concerned, and the outside world has come to regard it more in the light of sacrilege than sacrament. This, of course, is entirely erroneous for the great majority of Americans. Actually they are a home-loving people with a deep regard for the sanctity of marriage, but their reputation has been smirched by that section of the public belonging mostly to the leisure classes wallowing in wealth, together with the generous quota of the Hollywood film colony who all too constantly take advantage of the Reno divorce mills. Six weeks' residence and a large fee are guaranteed to unravel the most complicated knot as easily as a shoestring. One American wit has aptly described Reno as the only inland spot where the "tieds come in and the untieds go out."

Traveling overland from Chicago to San Francisco, streamlined trains usually draw into Reno by night to let off the passengers who have come to obtain new streamlined divorces. The porters who rush to meet the new arrivals and collect the deluxe luggage are sure of a handsome tip since only the wealthy can afford to disembark. Reno is no place where veiled ladies creep in guiltily under the cover of dark. By contrast, they step off the train full of confidence looking as if they were alighting at some fashionable spa. For Reno is as bright by night as Broadway. After passing over Nevada's many miles of desolate plains and dull hills, peppered by sleepy small towns, Reno rears up like a gaudy chorus girl of the "gay nineties." Everything possible has been done to provide gaiety and distraction for those who are compelled to put in six weeks' residence. Luxury hotels sparkle comfort and wide-open gaming houses

and cabarets create a festive atmosphere. The entire place is spangled with glitter and made as alluring as possible, while the people dance like moths about the lights, killing ennui by chasing from one place of entertainment to another.

Reno calls itself "the largest small town in the world." The title is fully justified if it is judged by prosperity and the floating population. Divorce there is a thriving industry. Luxurious hotels are always busy, the lawyers' offices continuously besieged while the courts work overtime pouring out freedom like champagne to the dilapidated and marriage-worn victims who, according to Walter Winchell, have gone to be "reno-vated."

While the Englishman may not be a jot more virtuous than his American neighbor, he nevertheless does attempt to use discretion where his private life is concerned. And when he does commit the fatal sin of being found out and lands himself in the divorce court, the affair is conducted quietly with the least possible fuss, and with what might be termed a decent regard for the finer feelings of the discarded partner. Divorce does not make headline news in the English press. Most cases are relegated to a brief space in some inside corner of the newspaper. Sordid details are strictly forbidden publication. Merely listings and hearings are considered sufficient. But in the U. S. A., things work quite differently and particularly when a case concerns a public figure. All details will then be flagrantly publicized and illustrated and worse still, lushed over with sentiment.

It is also quite possible for a wife to read of her impending divorce in a popular gossip column, and when she angrily turns to deny the statement, she's quite likely to find that the columnist knew more

about her private affairs than she did. Then to crown her humiliation the news will possibly be followed up with a soulful picture of her present husband gazing yearningly on his future wife before the first wife has so much as been notified of his intentions.

Recently a chatty newspaper column reported an interview with the second "Mrs. Movie Star." Mrs. Star, so the reporter declared, had been utterly charming except that she was taciturn and refused to yield up the desired information as to whether or not she had agreed to divorce the irresistible male. But, as the columnist went on kindly to say, she was sure that Mrs. Star would relent and not be hard on him, as she seemed far too nice a woman to deny him his happiness—his happiness being a well-known actress! Surely there is no wife alive who could deny such a heart-rending appeal! All this was published long before divorce proceedings were even commenced. For weeks the public was kept well informed as to all the latest happenings of the Star triangle. One newspaper published a most touching picture of the stalwart Star with a small pathetic little actress clinging to his manly arm and both of them turning away from a besieging crowd clamoring for autographs. Both faces wore expressions of pained resignation. As for Mrs. Star number two, her role seemed to be that of an insurmountable brick wall that no amount of persuasion could destroy.

But since then, as all the world knows, Mrs. Movie Star number two has acted like a perfect little gentleman and agreed to make way for her successor, while Mr. Star has shown up handsomely and exhibited qualities that mark him far above the average. Later news reports proved that. One was headed, "Mrs. Star's Wait Is Eased by Books."

The article went on to say that Star had sent books for his second wife to read during the six weeks required before she could file a friendly suit against him in Reno. Such gallantry is truly touching.

Just as America has its divorce mills, so it also has its marriage mills operating in various states. For the law of matrimony is in no way uniform throughout the U. S. A. Each state attends to its own domestic affairs and sets its own norms in the business of marriage.

The State of Illinois, for instance, insists that three days shall elapse between the application and issuance of the marriage license, during which time both parties must submit themselves to medical examinations. The hygienic principle is excellent enough when it works, but in the adjoining State of Indiana the people can be married without delay and no embarrassing questions asked. The result is that people from Illinois swarm over the border for the purpose of their nuptials. Illinois is constantly in a pet on this score and is ever rebuking its citizens for evading their own state laws. This is particularly true when the marriage turns out to be a failure and the troubles have to be aired in court. It is no uncommon occurrence for a couple to fly across the border to get married during a drunken spree and return to wake up next morning in Illinois and find that the lark has a long-time penalty attached. The judge can be very surly and unrelenting under the circumstances. And unless a couple possesses the means for a Reno divorce, they are likely to stay in a fix for a long time, since they are domiciled in one state and were married in another.

The State of Indiana reaps a very rich harvest out of these fugitive marriages, and will bless with gusto any couple who brings the fee along. There is,

however, a section of Indiana society with more idealistic principles which is agitating very persistently to have the marriage law revised. I happened to meet the president of one of the multitude of female clubs that flourish throughout America, and she very lucidly outlined for me some of the principles for which her particular organization is fighting. Her club, I understood, was composed of academic ladies with positive ideas and militant political aspirations.

"We just don't sit down," she assured me. "We're up and doing, every one of us. This marriage racket must be rooted out, or else. . . ."

"Just how do you go about it?" I ventured. "I mean, who is directly responsible?"

"Who's responsible?" she snorted hotly. "Why, the Legislative Asesmbly, of course. Who else would you imagine? A fine bunch we've got there! They won't see a thing when it pays them not to, but we'll make them see, or else. . . ."

"Or else what?" I stammered.

"Or else we'll know the reason why. We have passed a resolution demanding that no marriage licenses shall be granted until the applicants have satisfied the medical authorities. Furthermore, we demand sterilization of the unfit. That is what we are fighting for. That and nothing else."

The lady towering over me was a raw-boned spinster and as she spoke, she continually smote her right palm with her left forefinger by way of emphasis. Her manner was so purposeful that I felt sure she was concealing a stethoscope and a surgeon's knife somewhere on her person, ready to whip into action or else. . . .

As the conversation continued without any contribution on my part, I gathered that an important meeting, long-planned, had been held the day before

and that the president was still smoldering with rage over the indecent and insulting remark of a member of the Legislative House. He had been invited to hear what they had to say and in turn to report just what action, if any, the House had taken over their marriage and sterilization resolution. The president had spoken first and was followed by a lady doctor of public hygiene, and another who was a prominent social worker. All speeches were splendidly detailed and very thorough, she assured me, and which, listening to the lady, I could quite well appreciate. When, however, the honorable member rose to reply, he had not only treated their serious objectives with levity, but with insults. It was not true, he informed them, to accuse the House of having ignored the worthy aims of the Club. On the contrary, the matter had been given careful and grave consideration. But after a great deal of argument, the House was unable to decide who should be sterilized—the Democrats or the Republicans.

Elkton, Maryland, is another spot where the marriage mills ground at full speed. This particular place even outdid Indiana, for it had marrying pastors who'd go right out for business by advertising the easy marriage facilities and who incidentally scooped an excellent living from the proceeds. Recently, however, legislation has been passed to restrict these marriage makers and generally tighten up the marriage laws of Maryland. The result is that Elkton is suffering a severe depression, since the marriage ceremony was its main industry.

While there are still two or three states that trade in marriage and divorce, most American states now have laws aimed to prevent hasty marriages and casual divorces. Unfortunately, the yellow press continues to play up the matrimonial adventures of

colorful personalities and grants them the privacy of goldfish.

By contrast, little England with its moderation in all things seems dull and unexciting in affairs of the heart. The morals of the average Englishman are probably no better than those of the ordinary American. But in England, morals are afforded the same privacy as the daily bath, and as a result the English lull themselves into a false sense of moral superiority and continue to lift shocked eyebrows at "those Americans."

CHAPTER VII

RETICENCE

Reticence is by no means an American characteristic. It might almost be described as an unknown quantity. This again could easily be another reflection on the yellow press to whom nothing is sacred. But it is more likely that it springs directly from the haphazard manner of discipline which the average American child enjoys. Buddy and Junior America are unsuppressed youngsters, and are encouraged to be engagingly frank from birth. The louder they blurt their animal needs, the cuter they are to "Mar" and "Par." It is not surprising, then, that a child who has been allowed to exhibit his individual self from the cradle up will develop to maturity completely free of inhibitions, which is the American term for reticence. Consequently Mr. Average America is a disconcertingly candid fellow who will discuss his love-life with a perfect stranger and tell it with the same blatant candor that he employs to discuss political situations.

Perhaps there is no better place for gaining a stranger's intimate confidences than on the train, for the American is a loquacious traveler. There is nothing of the English reserve about him. On the contrary, he will chum up with everyone and tell his life story many times over en route from New York to San Francisco.

It is quite useless to try and evade him, for even though you stack yourself with books and barricade yourself behind a positive book-stall of newspapers, you can be quite sure that he will storm your de-

fenses before many miles are traversed. He loves to talk and to talk about himself. I was not many miles out of Chicago before I encountered my first confidential stranger. A little man with a "derby" hat clamped down over his brow crossed the carriage and came and sat next to me. He had been sitting opposite, next to a lady whom I judged to be his wife, and who had just left the car.

"They don't have too much heat on in here," he began by way of introduction. "I'm feeling quite cold. My wife feels the cold awful. She's gone through to the compartment to see if it's warmer. Guess it must be. She ain't come back. Those pipes don't seem to be doing an awful lot." With that, he suddenly disappeared under the seat to inspect the heating, and for one glad moment I thought that he was lost. But he soon emerged looking gloomier than ever and dolefully shaking his head.

"Guess they think it's summer around here. Those doggone pipes are cold." Since the temperature was quite comfortable for me, I remained silent. But he was not discouraged. For rolling himself up into a ball, rather like a caterpillar, he peered at me from under his "derby" hat and commenced to ply me with questions.

"Going far?"

"Across the continent," I replied.

"Know the west coast at all?"

"No. I am afraid that I do not."

"Well, you're going to like it plenty, I guess. It's sure a good place to be going. Where do you come from?"

"England."

"Well, well, that's a long ride from here, too, I guess. Ain't ever been that far, myself. But I've met plenty that has. Yes, ma'am."

Then unwinding himself a trifle, he came a bit closer and whispered confidentially,

"I used to work on the trains. I was a conductor on this very line. That's why I like to take a ride for my vacation. My wife was all set for a ship cruise, but I like to stick to the trains. It kinda brings back the old days. Forty years I was on this line. Right up to two years ago." There was such a wealth of yearning in his voice that I felt compelled to ask him why he had given it up.

"Got married," he sighed heavily. "Fifty-eight years a bachelor; then I had to go and get married." He had curled himself up tightly again as he spoke, and sat huddled in remorse. "After fifty-eight years going one's way it's too late to make changes, I guess." I nodded in agreement, not knowing quite what was expected of me.

"But your wife," I ventured, not able to resist the sudden twinge of curiosity. "Was she a spinster?"

"No-o-o, ma'am. I'll say she wasn't. I'm her fourth." A genuine note of pride had come into his voice as though to infer that he had yielded up his freedom to no ordinary woman. His wife was a proved specimen of charm and being her fourth was something of an honor.

"Really, four husbands!" I gasped. "How very romantic. I should imagine that your wife must know enough about marriage to make it a success."

"Knows a bit too much, I guess. That's half the trouble. She sure got things working her way from the start. My ways didn't suit her, I reckon, and one way and another she's changed me clean 'round from what I was. When I was on the job, my time was my own. You know what I mean. When the run was over, I had my evenings to myself. Once in awhile I got 'round to reading a book. I like a good book,

on and off. But that's all changed now. The wife likes to gad. So it's movies and theaters. Dancing too," he groaned miserably. "And the meals they dish up in those places. Right enough for those who like 'em, I guess, but I got used to making a bite to eat myself. My stomach gets all upset with these messes."

"That's too bad," I murmured sympathetically. He seemed to be gradually shrinking under his hat. "He looks nice, doesn't he?" he said suddenly as the conductor passed through the compartment.

"Hi, there, Bud," he called in greeting and waving a small skinny hand. "Fine life is his," he said as he watched the man from sight. "None better. Sure and steady and always going places. Don't forget to take a look at Reno as you go through. It looks real pretty at night, with all the lights lit up." His voice took on a livelier note. He might have been speaking of the promised land.

"Have you ever been there?" I asked, careful to conceal my amusement.

"Well, not to stay over," he moaned ruefully. "But on the run of course, I've passed it thousands of times. My wife, though, she's been there twice now. First husband died. The other two of them she divorced—down there at Reno. Real bad one too, the last one was. It's funny, you know. But I met her when she was on her way back. Right here on this train. Queer, now, ain't it, how things turn out? Life's a crazy sort of customer, I guess."

His wife's return to the carriage spared me more of their intimate life story. She charged down the compartment like a grinning dynamo, and as she closed in upon her man I wondered, would she lose her fourth at Reno or was a higher providence about to rescue him, for my last glimpse of him seemed to

show only his hat. His small caved-in body had disappeared entirely.

Whilst doing my toilet the next morning, I was still chuckling over the little man's sorry story and wondering whether or not he had survived the night, when suddenly the door of the washroom burst open and what appeared to be a great bale of wool was flung into the center of the room. When, however, it gained a foothold, it turned out to be a large blonde lady with a tousled mop of synthetic hair crowning a hulk of unwieldy flesh and wrapped in a crumpled blue dressing gown. Flinging herself into a revolving chair she sent herself spinning for a few turns, then heaving a great sigh, she burst into speech.

"Gee, do I feel beaten up. This train is moving plenty fast, I'll say. You should just feel my head when those brakes go on. It shakes me all up, and no kidding. Jello's my middle name, I guess. Did you get any sleep, honey?"

"Yes, thank you. I slept very well," I murmured politely.

"Did you really now? Well, how you folks manage it beats me. My husband out there is another one. Nothing wakes him. He's asleep right now." As no reply was required I started to scuttle into my clothes.

"That's right, honey," she said, waving a massive arm. "You go right on and get dressed. Don't mind me. I'll smoke a cigarette and wake up. Have one?" she said, thrusting a package of Chesterfields under my nose.

"No, thanks. Not before breakfast."

"Oh, breakfast," she grimaced. "Don't mention eating. That's what's wrong, I guess. We've had just that much t'eat and drink this last week. It's been a regular picnic. Right up to the time we set

foot on the train. Did you see us get on last night?"

She seemed disappointed when I shook my head. "Imagine that now. Well, thought everyone must have seen us. We made that much noise. A real family party."

"That must have been fun."

"Fun! I'll say it was. Why, we've had the grandest time. We're from California. I like that best. I reckon. But we come East once in a while to see my boy. I have the other one back home. But my oldest, he's with my first husband. And boy, does he give us a good time!"

I shed the last remnant of reserve without more ado. The story was too good to miss.

"Does your first husband live in Chicago?"

"Why, sure, honey, he lives in Chicago. They have just the cutest apartment you ever saw. With loads of room. We've been staying there now these three weeks."

"Is he married again, too?" I queried, trying to conceal my surprise at this jolly matrimonial mix-up.

"Sure, he's married again. Must be six years now. She's a nice enough kid, a bit starchy in some ways. You know—one of those school teacher kind. Still she suits him, I guess. Not that he's a bad fellow altogether. But he's no picnic either, on full time. You know how I mean, honey." I tried to convey that I understood perfectly.

"And your present husband—is he a success?"

"Well, he's all right, I reckon. You can't hope to get everything you want in one man. The best of them is a prize packet. Never know just what you're likely to find. When I see the two of them together, I think if I could put the best of both of them in one skin, then everything would be dandy. And that's

the way it is." With that she stood up and yawned a note that shook the compartment. And as she prepared to shed her one blue draping, I hastily grabbed my belongings and fled. I felt that I had been treated liberally enough.

The books that I had intended to read on the journey were never opened. For before I had time to digest one burst of confidence, I was listening to another. There was a man on his way to a new radio appointment in San Francisco, and when he was not busy playing with the radio dial and blasting the Club Car with static he was chatting. I, being a stranger, he seemed to feel that it was his bounden duty to acquaint me with a full and detailed account of every radio personality and himself included. After an hour of his company, I knew his past salary, as well as all of the conditions concerning his new contract. In truly American style he assured me that he was about to receive the biggest pay check that was ever yet paid to an announcer.

"And don't forget," he told me, "if you should ever find yourself with time to spare, just look up station XYW and ask for me. You'll sure have a swell time seeing how we put things on the air in this country. I'm telling you, our stations are the best in the world."

I had ceased to wonder what was coming next. I had reached the stage when silence seemed golden. With a book in hand, I had ensconced myself in what seemed to be a quieter corner, when a little lady sidled up to me and started off with the usual line of questions. I refused to do more than bark yes and no, when all at once she dived into her handbag, and after a few moments, produced a photograph of two children which she thrust under my nose.

"These are ours. Cute youngsters, aren't they?"

"Quite," I muttered, and left it at that.

"We got them last year in New York."

That caused me to look again. I didn't seem to have heard correctly, since not only were they grown children, but one looked considerably older than the other.

"What, both of them?" I asked incredulously.

"Yep. That's right. I wouldn't take one alone. I told Elmer that. Elmer's my husband. I said if you want one child, then you want two. So that's what we did. And right pleased we are with them."

"You mean that you've adopted them?" I asked round-eyed with wonder.

"Sure, honey. That's just what we did. Got them both from the foundling home. I always wanted children, and so did Elmer, but when I had my operation, I lost everything. Can you imagine, honey. They never left me a thing!"

I couldn't imagine. At least, I tried not to, and fearful of hearing further details, I went touring the car once more in search of peace. My head was buzzing with the intimate confessions of my fellow travelers.

But such candor loses its novelty after a while and it set me longing for a trainload of silent Englishmen in exchange. I could not help contrasting this journey with my last English jaunt.

I was going from London to Macclesfield, which is a stop eighteen miles before Manchester. The carriage was full up all the way and during the four hours, not a single word was uttered. The only sound was the occasional turning of a page and the rustle of a newspaper. Unfortunately, it was dark when we reached Macclesfield, and to make matters worse, my end of the train was ambushed in the tunnel. I

could hear that the porter was calling out some station or another, but I was too far away to distinguish the name. Yet for the life of me, I couldn't raise my voice and break down the silence that was as solid as the Wall of China. I looked hopefully around me thinking that perhaps if I appeared anxious enough, someone would venture a remark as to where we were. But no one, apparently, had the least interest in this particular station, and those who were not reading stared blankly before them, looking bored and extremely unapproachable. Thanks to my lack of courage, I had the joy of waving goodbye from the moving train to my host and hostess who were standing on the station platform patiently awaiting my arrival.

During the eighteen mile return trip from Manchester to Macclesfield on a very slow, cold local train, I had plenty to say against the English temperament and my own included. But, after three long days and nights spent with loquacious and confidential Americans, I realized it had a good deal to recommend it. A little English reserve would come in very handy to the Americans who have a disconcerting way of turning a train into a confessional box and spilling out intimate facts that should be told only to a priest or a psychiatrist.

CHAPTER VIII

CHICAGO

Chicago was a keen disappointment to me. I had heard so much about the city of gangsters that I had expected to walk straight into a hotbed of racketeers where desperadoes sported along the sidewalks displaying the latest designs in masks and brandishing sawed-off guns instead of walking sticks. I was even prepared to see an occasional corpse flung from a hotel window or tossed carelessly out of a moving taxi. Police squads should have been careening around every street corner and screaming out the riot act with a few sundry exhibitions of sharp-shooting thrown in if my secret expectations were to be realized. But alas, I had been hoaxed and completely misled both by my misinformed English as well as American friends, for after spending four consecutive months in the fair city of Chicago, and hearing nothing more exciting than a motor tire explode, I am fully convinced that the evil reputation is a myth. Furthermore, that it has been deliberately built up and continuously fanned by a sensational press which for reasons best known to itself seems bent on presenting Chicago to the world as the "scarlet woman of America."

The dominating newspaper has a vast circulation and is avidly devoured by millions of people. By its own modest acknowledgment it is the world's greatest newspaper. But exactly upon what it bases its claims, I have not discovered unless, of course, it stands supreme by nature of its startling headlines.

These are certainly composed to thrill millions of Chicago readers and shock the outside world. This newspaper believes in truth and bald facts and when sin is sin it blazons it across the front page in stark naked detail that would make the London *Times* faint away in horror. I must admit that my first acquaintance with it caused me to blink a few times in astonishment, for in double headlines, black with righteous fury and in large enough print to announce a declaration of war, was an announcement that a girl had been raped in a city hotel!

Chicago is the second largest city in the U. S. A. with a population of more than four and a half million people. Yet, for some reason or other, it is badly off for a dignified early morning newspaper. There is the Chicago *Daily News* which stands shoulders above the rest for dignity, but since that does not appear upon the news stands until mid-day, you are compelled to take what is the best of a sad batch if you like to read the news early in the day, and to get accustomed to wading through the blood-soaked sheet—and take crime, rolls and coffee for breakfast. For the Chicago papers seldom disappoint you. They can invariably resort to some secret muck heap and rake up a ruined female for the daily headlines.

The one word that the news reporters seem deliberately to delete from their daily records of ravishings is "consent," and in all fairness to the male population, this ought occasionally to get honorable mention, particularly when a poor bedraggled female, weeping to an outraged gallery of men, admits that fighting for her honor has got her nowhere and passive resistance appears to have become the better part of valor.

If Chicago is the evil, lecherous city that the press would have the world believe, then its sins must run

very deep, for there is little to indicate its presence to an inquisitive visitor. Chicago from my experience is a fair city that is calm and orderly to a degree. I have seen far more evidence of vice in London when drunks and disorderlies were being tossed out into the street from a saloon bar, and even in the staid and respectable city of Melbourne when a few years ago, its police force went out on strike for a few hours. It may be that Chicago does breed better and finer gangsters with superior marauding tactics to those of other states, but if this is so then it must have been the closed season for them during the four months that I spent there. Either that or the police have done such a thorough cleaning-up job that it is comparatively dull these days, from an evil aspect. In a way I was disappointed since I had been led to expect so much, and I should like to have had a peep at the real thing and a chance to appraise a really great gangster, something approaching a Dillinger whose memory is fast becoming enveloped in romance. So much so that Jesse James, the one-time outlaw and bandit supreme, is likely to sink into oblivion, unless active steps are taken to cherish his memory. His feats of daring have become mere puppy antics compared to those of the martyred Dillinger.

"Do you know that my mother once shook hands with Dillinger?" a University student told me proudly one day when gangsters were being discussed. There were several dubious murmurs from other students inferring that Julie was carrying her boasting a bit too far.

"Aw, go on, Julie," spoke up a young doubtful. "How're you goin' to prove a thing like that? Your mother wouldn't be likely to get near a guy like Dillinger."

"She certainly did, I'll have you know. We keep a gent's outfitted store and he came in to buy a pair of gloves, see? And my mother fitted them on."

"So what?" sneered the youth.

"Then he gave her a twenty dollar bill. That's a lot of money in a small store. Mother was kinda suspicious, and as the police had published the numbers of some of the notes stolen by Dillinger, my mother telephoned and sure enough this was one of them. So, you see, it's true. My mother did shake hands with Dillinger. And what's more, he robbed a bank that very afternoon!" she ended with a flourish. Julie apparently had proved her point without doubt, and the following moment of silence was the hall mark of respect for the lady who had done the next best thing to kissing the President.

My colored maid was another one who, I discovered held Dillinger in high regard.

"I reckon it was a crime to bump off a guy like Dillinger," Johnnie protested hotly one morning, as she was cleaning out my apartment. Her bovine expression was suddenly lit with indignation and the dust which she invariably smeared back into the corners seemed likely to be scoured out in her quick burst of righteous anger.

"Never gave him a chance to make a getaway. Just bumped him off stiff where he stood. Some dirty squealer it was, the rat."

"But wasn't he a desperate character, Johnnie? I mean, wasn't shooting at sight the only possible way to deal with him?"

"You bet it was. But that don't make it right. Dillinger was tough all right, for some folks, I guess. But for me and the likes of me, he was a regular guy. Never harmed the poor folk. He wouldn't take a mite of corn from them. He only took from the rich

ones—them that is stuffed with dough and the real tightwads. There's plenty that's not so good as Dillinger, and plenty a lot worse that don't get bumped off. See what I mean, honey?"

I couldn't quite see what she meant exactly, so I did not try to explain, and by this time Johnnie had dived into a secret pocket, and extracted an apple. Burying her strong teeth in it, she trundled around the room with an apple in one hand and, in the other the broom with which she pushed back into the corners the dust that her wrath had unfortunately disturbed. She looked for all the world like a large cow, chewing her grievances in the cud.

Actually, Dillinger was a Hoosier from the adjoining state of Indiana, and not a Chicagoan at all. But since he had selected Chicago as one of his more favorite spots for outlawry, and also met his death in that city, he is generally looked upon as a native son. I have heard many fierce arguments on this score, mostly among students, and Indiana men get quite sore when the king of gangsters is filched from them by the sister state.

Whether it was that I was unusually dull, or merely short-sighted, I don't know, but the much boasted crime aspect of Chicago entirely escaped my notice. Instead I found it a delightful city and a happy place to stay in. Perhaps I am prejudiced in its favor and that quite likely may be on account of the lake which graces the city for more than thirty miles. But whatever it is, I like it, and am ever inclined to return to it.

It was summer when I arrived and Chicago was wearing its most festive attire. The park lands adjoining the lake were lush and green. Trees trellised the way for miles and reached out shady arms dappling wide lawns in lace whilst the lake was a

blue expanse of dancing water. Little bays curve about the shore where small craft, with taut sails, idle in friendly groups, and on sunny days, which was almost always, the beaches were peopled by young and small folk in gay bathing suits which suggested a city with a healthy and happy disposition quite contrary to the evil reputation that it enjoys.

Chicago's waterfront, its magnificent parks and boulevards, undoubtedly comprise a great part of its charm. Driving out along Michigan Boulevard brings memories of the Paris Bois. There is a great deal of similarity in both park lands, except that Chicago is infinitely better groomed, for Chicago takes special pride in its green expanses and sees to it that every inch of lawn for miles is kept watered and trim, and the flower beds perpetually blooming. In summer, it all looks fresh and carefully tended as though it had just been washed and scrubbed and set down with a bidding to keep clean. The whole creates a delightfully cool setting to a city that in summer swelters under an unkindly heat.

Chicago's civic story has not been one of straightforward progress. More than fifty years ago, most of the city was razed by fire, and it is all the more remarkable and praiseworthy that such an imposing city should have developed in what is comparatively so short a spell of time. Fire is, of course, a cleansing element, and undoubtedly Chicago benefitted immeasurably by its advent. Many crooked byways and mean streets, littered with squalid buildings, made grand fuel, and cleared the way for the wide thoroughfares and splendid buildings that are there today.

I was living near one of the beaches about half an hour's bus drive from the Loop, as the business and shopping section is quaintly called. The ride to and

fro was always a joyous outing and ran over a perfect white ribbon road, curving through a green park that was flanked on one side by luxurious residential buildings with a blue lake and leafy gardens on the other. The buses, too, are of an especially comfortable variety. Large modern vehicles that glide smoothly and quickly and a ten cent ride along the boulevard never failed to puff me up with a million dollar feeling.

Chicago does not resemble New York to any great extent. As a large American city, national characteristics do of course prevail, but the language for one thing is definitely easier to understand than New Yorkese, and as a city, it is far more gracious and courteous. Perhaps that is due to the absence of the mad scurry and nervous tension that seems to hold New York in a vice. Chicago by contrast is like a buxom parent who has not yet lost control of her brood and can still find time to tend her garden and smile at a passing visitor. Actually it is far more representative of real America than New York can ever hope to be. It is, of course, cosmopolitan to a great extent as are all American cities. Nevertheless, in the mid-west, there is far more evidence of the real American, and ever so often you can put your finger on a calm, virile-looking person and feel that at last you are discovering the real thing.

During August Chicago blistered in a heat wave. For the entire month and most of September, the thermometer rose above the eighty mark and stayed set. If it varied at all, it was to soar upwards but never down. The nights were often hotter and more oppressive than the days, so that each morning, you staggered out of bed feeling a bundle of swollen pulp without energy enough even to yawn. From day to day there was no respite. The only thing to do

was to repair to the lake, swim in tepid water and take constant draughts of iced water which is the one unailing stand-by throughout America.

It was during this period that I watched Chicago shed its clothes, for with the advent of summer, Chicago exhibited a blissful disregard for convention, and when the heat arrived, it undressed. I watched it not without a streak of envy, and wondering just why it was that I felt compelled to spend the days sweltering in a dress, when even the police have flung their coats and vests and gone on duty in their shirts. Day by day I expected to come out and find them directing traffic clad only in a brief undergarment and I feel sure that if the summer had lingered this might quite likely have happened. Actually it is no more than a demonstration of practical common sense, and it makes you wonder, for instance, why the Sydney and Melbourne police are compelled to suffocate in thick uniforms when the thermometer points well over the hundred mark. But then the British are British and conventions will be observed until the end. Our policemen possibly would not make such good nudists, or it may be that they are shy, but in America, where comfort is the first consideration, all manner of strange sights are possible.

At the beach district where I was staying, the undressing went on apace. Garments were cast off with the nonchalance of the strip-tease artist, and it was quite a usual sight to meet women of all ages and sizes from flappers to iron-gray matrons out on shopping expeditions wearing only a pair of shorts and a small brassiere, while the men roamed the streets naked except for a pair of pants or brief shorts. It is true, of course, that conventionality does at times impose certain discomforts, but it is nevertheless a somewhat startling sight to meet a

large woman almost raw, with a great expanse of back and stomach glistening like sides of sweating ham, quibbling with a butcher over a joint of meat, or perambulating around the store lugging a heavy bag of vegetables along with her. I don't think that prudery plays much part in my make-up, and for all that I care, the nudists can keep their colonies, and make merry in them. But from a purely esthetic point of view, there is a good deal to be said, and since life is a matter of give and take and the susceptibilities of our neighbours should count for something, then I for one must say that I find dressed flesh an infinitely preferable sight to sweating nakedness, particularly in the market-place.

This undressed aspect of Chicago is merely another example of the thorough-going American who does nothing by halves. Where his comfort is concerned, he is by no means Spartan, for when the first chill breeze threatens, he muffles up to the ears, closes all of the windows, and turns on the heat to stew himself gently through the winter. Just as when the sun appears, he flings off his clothes, and disports his flesh with blissful disregard for public opinion.

2

In glorious contrast to the casual attitude of attire is Mayor Kelly's determined effort to improve the minds of the people and make Chicago a top-notch center of culture. "Keep Chicago Ahead" is his slogan, and the maxim is fast becoming a testimony of achievement. Each night during the summer, in Grant Park at the edge of the lake, the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, under the baton of its own superb conductor or that of a visiting maestro, gives free concerts of classical music. To add to the attraction,

each week one and sometimes two musical or dramatic celebrities are brought to the bandshell entirely at the expense of the civic authorities and at no cost whatever to the public. There is seating accommodation for anything up to fifty thousand people, and the overflow, which is often twice as many, spread themselves out picnic fashion on the grass, and share in the world's best music and artists.

The evening newspapers enjoy prolific sale during the concert series. Newsboys buzz like flies and people buy any paper at random to use to spread on the grass and sit upon. When the concert is over and the throng has departed the park is sheeted in white newspaper. I was one of a throng of more than one hundred and fifty thousand people who gathered to hear Jascha Heifetz. It was a unique experience to hear those magic cadences lifting with zephyr lightness into a starry heaven and the rapt attention of the vast audience was itself an unforgettable memory. All manner of people are attracted to the bandshell. They come singly, in couples and in droves, and sometimes whole families are grouped together on the grass utterly oblivious to everything but the music, and I've watched many a dusky negro who appeared drunk with ecstasy as though enchantment had robbed him of all physical power, his problems floating free.

The only disturbing elements in all this are the ice cream and candy vendors. These invade the scene like locusts and insist upon screaming their wares regardless of what's going on. They have no respect either for the music or the artists, and the more profound the silence, the louder they chirp. It is a great pity that they cannot be gagged during selections or forcibly ejected from the scene.

The vast nightly throngs that gather for the concerts are proof positive that Mayor Kelly's cultural efforts are a priceless boon to many otherwise starved music lovers and are appreciated by a great majority. Yet I have met people in the very heart of Chicago who are blissfully unaware of the benefits in their midst. One family whom I visited and who had just returned from Russia treated me to a eulogy on the cultural facilities provided by the Soviets.

"Can you imagine," thundered my host, "free concerts, free, mark you, for all the world to hear? Best music, best artists, best everything. Boy, it's just wonderful what those people are doing over there. And drama too—all in the open air and free!"

"Did you hear Jascha Heifetz in Grant Park?" I inquired casually.

"Nope! I'm afraid that I didn't." He brushed my remark aside as though a fly had tickled his nose, and continued to rave about Russian cultural advantages.

"Mischa Elman played there last week. And Tito Schipa sang," I broke in again as soon as I got the chance. "Did you happen to hear either of them? Those concerts were also free for all the world to share."

His jaw dropped perceptibly.

"Well, now you mention it, I do remember having heard something about them some place else, but I've not had time to get around to them yet."

"Much closer than Russia," I observed. "Less than a mile from here, and certainly a good deal cheaper. A ten-cent bus fare is all that you require," I even offered to escort him straight to the park just to prove that democracy was staging a cul-

tural feast second to none right under his nose, if only he could be persuaded to open his eyes and emerge from his Russian dream.

3

I also have to thank Chicago for my first personal contact with the negroes. In the four months of my stay, I was serviced by two colored maids, Johnnie and Bessie, and to both of them I owe an everlasting debt for having rid me of a phobia. It must have been rooted in my unconscious mind since a very early age, and possibly had been planted there by stray bits of conversation and impressions gained in passing. The idea of the white man's superiority, fostered since childhood, had something to do with it, as well as the news items that appear in newspapers from time to time—those sordid little paragraphs that reveal the deformed and maladjusted spots in society and which every nation greedily scoops up and rushes into print about the other. Normality is never news. It is only the abnormal that arouses attention, and a story of lynching carried out with barbaric ferocity is sure of hospitality in both the home and foreign press. To people abroad, who live in total ignorance of the negro, these items of lynching can have a far-reaching effect and are responsible for much fallacious thinking on the part of aliens. I blush to admit that I was one who entered the United States nurturing an idea that the negroes were a strange and different animal who in a moment of madness were likely to turn and attack a white woman on sight.

“Why do they lynch negroes?” I remember asking as a child.

"Because they are wicked people," I was told.

"What do they do?" I persisted.

"At times, they attack innocent white people. And then they must be severely punished."

Even to a child the punishment seemed unduly severe and extremely cruel, but when I stated my doubts, I was told in the moral preaching voice of white superiority, not to ask questions about things that I could not understand. From this I gathered that there were certain other sordid implications connected with lynching that my family did not consider a fit subject for young ears. So that out of ignorance on all sides had flourished the myth that negroes were not only different, but something to be feared as well.

It was Bessie, a little, slim, colored maid with a soft caressing voice and a ready smile who made short shift of my ill-grounded fears and quickly routed stupid, ignorant notions. She was a prim little person, very dark and extremely neat. She used to go about her duties in a quick, competent style, stopping occasionally to readjust her pince-nez that had a habit of slipping on her small stubby nose. Her fuzzy hair, rigorously brushed and shining with oil, was parted in the center and scooped into a tight knob that gleamed like a polished coal on the nape of her dusky neck. I have seen numbers of white Bessies in my time, in shops and offices, walking and traveling, identical people except for the color of their skin. And Bessie exploded still another myth, and proved that all negroes do not possess strong, flashing teeth, for hers were the artificial china variety and not particularly well-fitted at that.

Bessie had just returned from her summer vacation when I met her. Her family, it seemed, lived some distance from Chicago in the country.

"There's nothing like the country," she told me, "for setting a person up. Ah was raised out there and ah never saw a city 'til ah was grown. And when ah go back home, ah sure wish ah 'ad never left it."

"What do you do there on holiday?" I asked her inquisitively.

"Well, now, ah took long walks each day, had plenty t'eat and drink, and plenty of sleep. My mother believes in milk and eggs, yes ma'am. Eat plenty of 'em, she kept at me, and they will sure put back into your cheeks the color that the city's robbed." I stole many a surreptitious glance at Bessie's cheeks and wondered just how she defined color in her jet black skin. But unless it was the sort of ebony polished look that seemed to glow about her, I don't know. Bessie, however, had some way of marking her change in complexion, for she harped continually on her improved looks for weeks after her holiday. She was very much attached to her family and her mother in particular. She never tired of quoting mother's maxims to me. The amazing thing about it all was that Bessie appeared to have been raised on the same homely maxims as myself. Often when she recounted her mother's sayings to me I was jerked back to my own childhood. I'd heard the same things said over and over again. "An apple a day keeps the doctor away." "Early to bed and early to rise makes a man healthy, wealthy, and wise." "Never put off 'til tomorrow what you can do today." Those and a lot more such, and always prefaced by "my mother says." More and more I was struck with the similarity of our mothers' vocabulary. Then there were Bessie's fond memories of her father. Such a lovely man, she described him.

"Ah never heard a cross word pass his lips, no ma'am. He sure had a smile and a kind word for

everyone, and the way he cared for my mother and us children!"

Bessie was also a stern little moralist. She was fearsome in her denouncements of those "flighty bits" as she called them, that got themselves into trouble.

"When a girl's decent and upright she's got naught to fear. More, too, when she's raised right," she told me severely, with a prim adjustment of her glasses. "It's only those painted jitterbugs that drive a man crazy and lead him on to do things he's real sorry for."

Oh, Bessie, Bessie, you'll never know how excellent you were for me, and how often you humbled my ignorant self!

Johnnie was the exact opposite in type to Bessie and was just as large and bulky as Bessie was small and prim, but there was something equally likeable about her, despite the fact that she never salvaged a speck of dirt if she could possibly persuade it to remain hidden. During Johnnie's reign I was compelled to buy brooms and dusters and rake out the corners of dust that her daily visits piled up. But for all that I liked her, and looked forward to her warm smile and soft word of greeting each day.

Johnnie seemed to sway through life regardless. She reminded me somehow of a great buffer that small things sneaked away from. She was almost as dark as Bessie; her black hair was lank, and tightly-plastered down with oil, and her large somnolent eyes were for the most part heavy with dreams, but the moment she was interested, Johnnie was awake. Then her shoulders would lift and her heavy lids roll back and reveal great blazing eyes. There was an excitement in Johnnie's awakening and her smile seemed to fill the room. It came slowly to her lips.

Then all at once her face was alight with happiness—flashing teeth and dancing eyes. And when her large body joined in the merriment, she became an elemental force, quivering with fire. Talk of religion, food, or social conditions were three subjects that were guaranteed to stir Johnnie from her dreams. I don't think that she was actually a pietist, but she loved worship in the extravagant sense. Church-going was a grand outing to her, and something to be thoroughly enjoyed.

"Say, honey, but religion's just wonderful," she used to say. "It sure gets right down deep into you. Don't you like good singing and good preaching and the kind of music that just sets you on your feet and starts you marching around for glory? Gee, but it's swell! Salvation comes right up close to you. My, but religion's powerful good for folks!"

The color question touched her on the raw.

"Folks is folks," she would say, smouldering with rage. "Color don't make them no different. We've all got t'eat. But some folks just don't reckon it right, I guess. They make it that tough for a colored man to get work and then blame him for every darn thing that goes wrong. It's no wonder that he gets the devil in his skin once in a while. If taxes are good for colored folks, then work's good for them too. They can't pay no ways else. Life just don't seem easy for colored folks, I guess."

When Johnnie described the meals she had prepared for her family, her wide face was one big smile. You could almost hear the gastric juices welling into her mouth and her pink tongue would come out and lick her lips with relish.

"Did you never eat real southern fried chicken with corn cakes and buckwheat bread? Sure, honey, it's just the grandest ever. Well for crying out loud,

t'er think you never did eat a real southern fry!" It was as bad as admitting that you had never been baptized.

Johnnie was married at fourteen, she informed me. Looking back, she considered that fourteen was a bit too young for a young girl to settle down. Sixteen or seventeen was time enough. Her own daughter, who was the pride of her eye, was sixteen and according to Johnnie, all ripe for marriage.

"Is she like you, Johnnie?" I asked her.

"Sakes alive, no ma'am, she sure ain't! Why, my girl's as fair as a lily."

Johnnie's lily-fair daughter sounded in the nature of a miracle.

"Is your husband fair, then, Johnnie?"

"He certainly ain't. Why, that crazy nigger's as black as sin," she spat vehemently. "No, ma'am. My girl takes after my family. We're all fair, honey. Sure, ah'm the darkest, but you should just see my mother. She was real fair, and a beauty, jest the dead image of my gal." Johnnie's fair daughter remained beyond the scope of my imagination. Try as I would, I found it impossible to reconcile her lily-fair offspring with Johnnie and her black-as-sin husband. But Johnnie had the advantage of me there. She knew better.

Johnnie had a passion for apples. There was always one secreted somewhere on her person, and in moments of excitement or stress, a lusty bite of apple and a good chew seemed to steady her up and lull her back to her natural languor.

Chicago has more than three hundred thousand negroes. The largest colored quarter lies on the southern side of the city, and is a counterpart of many white districts. There are the same cheap and better grade apartment dwellings, hotels of all de-

scriptions, park reserves, stores, churches and cinemas, and a good sprinkling of negro police. Passing through it, it looks the same as any white suburban area except that the streets are filled with colored people.

The negro problem throughout America is very real and far from solved. It is a long sorry story, and their lot is far from enviable. Yet the negro has contributed very richly to American civilization. All that the white people know of rhythm and spirituals has been learned from their colored neighbors and the same can be said of tap-dancing. Through all of his tragic history he has sung and danced. Both with him are a natural instinct. Song is his outlet and his safety valve, and whether he sings or dances, he does it with a zest and quality that no white people can equal. The musical world has been richly endowed by the negroes. Great singers and musicians have emerged whose tone and quality have ranked them high, and whose artistic gifts enchant millions of listeners. The negro created the rhythm which is today the motif of the popular swing bands, but no matter how skilled the white executants might be, they are playing with borrowed coin. For rhythm in particular is native to the soul of the negro.

Chicago has provided me with a full measure of interest. For one thing, I began to discover America, and to understand something of its aspirations and closer problems. I saw much that I did not expect and a great deal that was foreign to my thinking. My one disappointment was the gangsters. These, alas, I did not see.

PART TWO

TRAVEL INTERLUDE

CHAPTER IX

HUMAN FREIGHT

An urgent call to Australia and a waterside strike in California coincided, so that all at once the problem of how to get out of America was even more acute than getting in had been. Visits to shipping offices filled my days. I worked steadily up one side of Fifth Avenue and down the other, rushing into every shop that exhibited a map or travel suggestions, trying to discover a ship that would carry me across the Pacific. Oceans, it seemed, were as plentiful as Christmas cards and just as various. At the mere mention of travel, the shipping clerk would dive into a drawer and produce an illustrated bundle for me to choose from. If only I could have said, "Thanks, I'll take that one, just wrap me up the Pacific," my dilemma would have soon ended. But it was not so simple. Worse still, the Pacific was out of stock. The shipping strike that had dragged on for more than three months was still a long way from being settled, and in consequence, Fifth Avenue travel experts had removed its likeness from their picture gallery and were devoting all their attentions to smaller and better-behaved oceans, none of which were the least good to me. At last, one of Mr. Cook's energetic clerks came to my rescue and puz-

zled out two alternative routes for me. One was to return to England and chance getting accommodation on a P. & O. or Orient liner via the Suez Canal, or to take what he described as a leap in the dark and go by way of a small English freighter that was leaving New York via the Panama Canal. I chose the freighter, despite the non-committal attitude of the shipping clerk.

"We're not recommending this, understand," he emphasized. "We only offer it as a suggestion. We don't deal in freighter accommodation ordinarily, don't know a thing about this line, good or bad, except that it's British and it does have some accommodation, but what it's like, search me. We have no plan whatsoever of the ship and we wouldn't even suggest it, ordinarily," he repeated again. "But if you've got to make this trip in a hurry, then I certainly see no way else for it. A freighter's no palace any time," he warned me, "but—"

His thorough denial of all responsibility did not, however, prevent him from transacting business in the brisk, energetic manner of the Fifth Avenue salesman. For no sooner had I intimated my decision than a sharp breeze of efficiency sprang up. His strong teeth shone out like stars and completely dazzled the proceedings. In a few minutes, it seemed, he had taken possession of my dollars and I was equipped with the right of way to board the "mystery brig" as soon as she appeared in port.

For some reason or other, a freighter never sails into port by the front entrance nor preens itself in the fearless light of day. Instead it sneaks up like a beggar through the back door and hides in the dirtiest and grimmest water alley that it can find. And this freighter was no exception. I eventually found it at the far end of Brooklyn in the midst of a slum,

ambushed in a jungle of cargo and immense packing cases that were being whirled aloft by ear-splitting cranes and derricks. Raucous voices were everywhere, shrieking directions to the wharf laborers and I found myself being shoved aside like a small insect that had hopped into a dirty picture.

"Hi, Sister, look out. Do yer want your nut cracked in?" roared a voice at my elbow as a great arm swung me safe from a traveling crate. "What do yer want here anyhow?"

"The ship," I answered, "I am a passenger."

"Why the hell didn't yer say so? I thought yer wanted to get bumped off." He piloted me through a maze of cargo that was stacked as high as skyscrapers and pointed to a plank of wood. "There's the gangway," he shouted. "You'd better hurry up and get on."

A dank evil smell indicated the presence of water, and having walked the plank, I stood on the ship's deck, ankle deep in coal dust, looking on to an indescribable scene of dirt and disorder. On one side, cargo was being stacked and dumped on board, while coal was pouring in on the other. Everything was coated in black grime and soot. The very air was grit. It was no wonder that Fifth Avenue had deftly denied all responsibilities before issuing the ticket. The thought of this and their gaudy illustrated booklets of luxury travel saved me from bursting into tears. The whole thing was ludicrous. I was all for turning and running away. The very idea of six weeks and probably seven spent in these surroundings overwhelmed me with misery. I was still trying to tell myself that this really was a ship and that I was actually on it, when a soft little cockney voice murmured at my side.

"Looks dirty-like, now, don't it, missy? But it ain't so bad once we get going. What's yer name?"

I told him.

"That's right, miss. Well, if yer come this way, I'll show yer 'round." I followed him down a small companion-way, minding his instructions not to bump my head on a low roof.

"This is the dining-room," he said proudly, ushering me to a small cupboard space containing two narrow tables with six fixed chairs running down either side, and at the end of the room stood an old-fashioned oak sideboard and a piano.

"Cozy, ain't it?" he chirped. "Looks real nice, too, when we get the flowers out."

"Flowers?" I echoed, stupidly falling into one of the chairs. I was suddenly overcome by a sensation of being squeezed into a box a few sizes too small.

"Well, only paper ones they are. Captain likes the daffs best, but sometimes we have the roses out. They make a change-like."

"Are there any other passengers?" I asked.

"Oh yes, miss. We got three ladies and three gents this trip, and the doctor, he makes seven. Quite a nice little party. You'll find you'll like it fine, once we get going." His peaky little face was all smiles, and I knew he was doing his best to be comforting. To a large extent, he succeeded. His very normality had a steadying effect on my sinking spirits.

"How about a nice cup of tea?" he grinned. "You just sit here, and I'll make a cup in half a jiffy."

Tea sounded like salvation at that moment and I smiled my grateful thanks. True to his word, he was soon back carrying a tray with an honest-to-goodness tea pot set on it, and thin white china cups and saucers that had wild violets growing around the edges. They looked like cabinet pieces after the concrete

variety of American china that I had become accustomed to using. In a flash, he had whisked out a clean white tea cloth and set out a homely tea spread of bread and butter and a dish of jam. Something in me melted at the sight of it. Here in this dirty slum area with coal and cargo raining overhead had suddenly appeared a tiny scrap of England as complete as any front parlor in a wayside cottage.

The tea table was no sooner set than a weedy-looking youth sidled in the doorway, and the little steward, who seemed to be all things on the ship, immediately effected the introductions.

"That's right, Doc," he said cheerfully, "here's yer tea just made, and just how yer like it. Is it alright for you, miss?"

"It's perfect," I assured him, and so it was—beautifully hot and strong and the fragrant aroma acted like magic on my taut nerves.

"Australian?" asked the doctor, sliding into a chair and laying hands on the teapot. His freckled face had a sickly tan, and a shock of sandy hair standing stiff from his forehead gave him a scared look.

"No, English," I returned.

"Oh, well," he shrugged in a pitying voice, as though he couldn't expect too much, and being English was the next best thing to being an Aussie.

"Been long in America?"

"A few months," I told him.

"Months!" he gasped. "Well, it beats me how people stand it. I never saw such a madhouse in all my natural. Three weeks was too long for me. The quicker we say goodbye to it the better I'll like it. Give me Australia any old time. It'll do me." By this time his arms were sprawled across the table entirely imprisoning the teapot. "Three weeks," he growled, "and believe it or not, but I never got a

decent cup of tea in all that time. Why doesn't someone teach them how to make the damned stuff?"

"They prefer coffee," I ventured.

"Don't tell me. I know," he hissed. His small green eyes were glittering beads. "Of course they prefer coffee. That's what's wrong with them. Caffeine addicts, the whole bunch. Result, overstimulation, feverish hell-for-leather lunatics. I can't get along without a cup of tea. Can't think or work properly without it." He had become suddenly apologetic, and emitting a shrill treble laugh, he drained the teapot.

In reply to a few travel questions, it appeared that New York had failed to please him from any aspect. He had learned nothing, seen nothing, and heard nothing of interest. Everything was overrated, far-fetched, and boosted out of all proportion. Australia could do just as well and better from his point of view.

"But science and hospitals. Surely you found them far in advance?" I queried.

"No, I did not!" he barked. "They were bigger and efficiently run," he admitted, but in his field, which was radiology, Australia was doing an equal job. I managed to stifle my doubts until such time as he had imbibed a sufficient quantity of tea to balance his judgment. Quite obviously, he was the victim of tea starvation.

The freighter was two days out of port before the six passengers had appeared in the dining room at one time. They straggled in singly, casting sheepish looks at their shipmates and mustering fixed grins whilst the introductions were mumbled by the captain. He headed the table—a corpulent, blond Yorkshireman and utterly humorless. Whether he was extraordinarily shy by nature or preferred the ship's

evil tasting food, I don't know, but for the most part he munched in solid silence and paid scant attention to the females who were seated on either side.

"Not much for the ladies," he grunted several times at the onset of the voyage, and accompanied by a warning scowl that should have deterred the most designing hussy. His name was Steele. I secretly named him "stainless." His spare time was spent constructing a doll's house and for hours on end he would sit with his huge stomach pressed against the table whilst he papered miniature walls and designed windows and entrances. The engineer, who was second in command, also sat at the passengers' table. He was a short, thick, dour Scot with a regard for alcohol and his bucolic face was always tinged with purple. He was also a prodigious eater, and even in the heat of the tropics, he could demolish three successive plates of stew, heavily seasoned with Worcester sauce, and splodges of mustard stirred in. Like the captain, he was given to silence, and quite often when the passengers were in heated discussion, they would exchange knowing glances that expressed open contempt for the chattering fools. The chief engineer harbored a grudge against all society, it seemed, for he never uttered a word unless it was dragged out of him. The captain once hinted a dark story concerning "old Scotty" as he affectionately called him.

A woman, it was, he avowed, that had driven Scotty to the bottle for solace, and since then, he had scorned all humanity and adopted canaries for his friends. Whenever the chief was off duty, he roamed the deck smoking his eternal pipe and carrying a small, caged canary. "Tweet, tweet," made up his entire vocabulary.

The sea was obviously an unhealthful environment for bird life, for invariably the chief lost one canary per voyage. Attachment, however, counted for little with him. It was the flock rather than the bird, for no sooner had he cast one feathered companion overboard than he got himself another at the next port. For twenty years he was never seen on deck without a small chirping friend. The cage acted as a buffer between him and his fellow creatures.

The passengers themselves composed a rare brew. Of the females, one was English, one Australian and one Irish-American, and of the men, one English, one Swiss and one American, and all of them were drawn from vastly different walks of life.

The grand lady of the voyage was the Australian. She was a red-haired spinster of uncertain age who had been tasting high society in the great capitals. The veneer with which she had managed to garb her personality was definitely threatened several times during the voyage. The California shipping strike had dealt her a savage blow for one thing and instead of her returning home with a grand flourish to wave greetings from the deck of a luxury liner, she would have to slink in at the back door and possibly get mislaid among the coal and cargo, which was infinitely more important than the passengers, once the ship touched port. Nevertheless, she put up a valiant fight to preserve the decencies of civilization, as she called dressing for dinner. By day, in her sports clothes, flat-chested and wearing her pince-nez, she presented a prim, school-marm appearance, but at night, when she donned her finery and sailed into the cupboard dressed for the evening hash, she managed to achieve a startling Restoration effect. With her flaming red hair piled high with curls and her flat chest puffed out with frills, she looked for all the

world like one of Wycherley's wenches lost at sea. Miss Australia was the ship's aphrodisiac. Her evening appearance never failed to cause a flutter in the male breasts. No sooner did she enter the room than there was a scuffle of chairs and a rush of willing hands to see that she was comfortably seated. Covert side glances, and pink relishing tongues would appear on all sides. All but the sullen chief, who refused to look up from his dish of stew and Worcester sauce.

The Irish-American lady provided a grand contrast in the matter of clothes. Likewise a spinster, she had a ferret-like face and lank sandy-colored hair that was plastered down on either side. During the seven weeks at sea, she wore only one dress, which did her duty in all climates. It was a faded yellow affair, streaked with brown. It dropped from her shoulders like a rented room curtain. Generally she looked as limp as a withered cornstalk ruthlessly plucked from a field. Curiously enough, she had more luggage than anyone else on board, but what was secreted in the cases remained a mystery. Perhaps it was her dread of drowning that influenced her to wear her oldest and plainest frock, for from the moment that the ship set sail, she was convinced that it was on the verge of sinking, and nothing could persuade her otherwise. The lightest breeze, or the suspicion of a roll was sufficient to send her scurrying to the captain's cabin to hear the worst.

"Don't hide it from me," she would plead. "Tell me the truth, are we in danger? Shall I put on my life belt?"

Sometimes he was able to allay her fears, but not often. Mostly she would repair to her cabin to tell her rosary and make her eternal peace. But there were occasions when even the heavenly hosts failed

her. Then she would weep her way around the ship in search of the doctor, and throwing herself at his feet, beg him to save her from the wreck—the wreck being a steady ship, mercifully cooled by a trade-wind. The doctor was exceedingly kind to Miss Irish-America. He continued to pat her hand, and lull her fears long after everyone else had lost patience, and refused to get ready to drown with her. The result was a dog-like devotion on the part of the spinster. She could not bear to let him out of her sight. She haunted his footsteps, and clawed his hand at every given opportunity. She got into his hair and soup alike, until they became known as substance and shadow. The friendship between them irked Miss Australia considerably. For some reason or other, her charms had failed to captivate the doctor.

“Uncivilized,” she called him when he turned a deaf ear to her long dissertations on politics and art. He had an exasperating way of standing by and grinning while she held forth, then suddenly walking off without a word of excuse. But it was music that caused the final rift between them. The doctor was a flutist and whenever he was not busy dosing the crew with castor-oil and jalap, he would take his flute out to a quiet corner of the ship and scatter melody over the waves.

“I loved that bit of Beethoven you were playing this morning,” she greeted him sweetly one day at lunch.

“Did you now? Well, that was Bach,” he returned with a small treble laugh.

“You’ll pardon me,” she spluttered indignantly, “but allow me to know Beethoven when I hear it.”

“Oh, I’ll allow you anything,” he trebled again. “Nevertheless, that was Bach! Like to see the music? I can show it to you,” he baited her.

With that, he commenced to hum some indescribable tune that succeeded in driving Miss Australia from the table, avowing heatedly from the doorway that she had never come across such downright rudeness in her life.

"How on earth such a creature could have found his way out of a University, I can't imagine," she said later. "He has no more culture than a turnip. His musical tastes are putrid anyhow." Positively disgusting, she described the friendship between the Doctor and the spinster.

"I never saw anything quite so brazen before," she remarked sourly one morning from the sunny corner of the passengers' deck. "You should have seen them last night. Of course, he has no intellect. I suppose that's why he likes her. She's old enough to be his mother anyhow. Revolting display, I call it. Don't you agree?" Her green eyes peered round for confirmation. Since I was thankful that it was the doctor and not I, who had been selected as the spinster's drowning partner, I could only remark that I considered him long-suffering and very kind.

"Kind!" she said balefully. "Well, I've heard it called some strange names in my time, but kind wasn't one of them." At which the Englishman, dozing in his chair, opened one eye and began to swing his extremely long legs like a dog recalling a past spree.

"Dear, dear," he murmured succinctly. "Do you really mean—?" Sitting bolt upright, he was suddenly all ears while Miss Australia recounted her moonlight revelations. The Englishman was seventy-two years old, very tall and exceedingly thin. Most days, he appeared to be in the slow process of decay. His gaunt face was hatchet thin, and his long beak nose and upward curling chin were ever ex-

changing confidences over the task of supporting his ill-fitting teeth. Whenever he was not talking, his jaws were munching and grimacing. The ship's meals were a torture to him. He could neither chew nor digest them, and no wonder, since all the food tasted as though it had been salvaged from the ash-can and stewed up with seawater and a dash of rancid fat. Compelled to subsist as he was on the ship's diet, he was quickly paring down to a wafer fineness ready to be wafted into eternity. His one remaining joy in life was a spicy innuendo or a bawdy jest. Sex implications of any sort had power to circulate his watery blood and send fine threads of scarlet coursing into his wasted cheeks. Not that he ever gave utterance to an unseemly word himself. Far from it. On the contrary, he was the shining example of the perfect gentleman staunchly maintaining the honor of his old school tie and Oxford blazer. If he listened, twitched and smirked with glee whenever a risqué story was whispered, he certainly never contributed to the sport himself.

Once when I was short a book, he offered to lend me "Gone With the Wind."

"I don't know if I ought to, though," he said with an arch lascivious grin, "unless you promise not to read the purple patches."

Promising, I went straight away to find them, and with precious little difficulty, for on every page where the heroine's honor was assailed even in the slightest degree, there were heavy strokes of red ink.

"I seldom read fiction," he was fond of repeating. "I always prefer science." His idea of science turned out to be the biological treatises of Havelock Ellis and his particular favorites were the passages dealing with sex aberration and sexual perversion. A volume of this sort was invariably tucked under

his arm at all times of the day. Such literature it seemed kept the blood alive in his shriveled veins.

In a burst of confidence, he told me that his wife was many years his senior.

"Is she still alive?" I asked tactlessly, realizing that he had himself already overlapped his allotted three score years and ten.

"By jove, yes. I should just say she is. And very much so. She was eighty-seven last birthday, and a very active woman, too." His mouth was a bitter curve, and his voice sullen and resentful.

"Twenty years ago her health failed. The doctors had practically given her up. Her one chance was to get to a warm climate. That's how we came to live in Queensland."

"And has it agreed with her?"

"Extraordinarily so," he burst out. "She simply thrives on the heat. It's amazing how she stands that inferno year after year. I personally can't stand it. If I didn't get to Europe occasionally, I should have faded out long ago." There was far more reproach than admiration in his voice for the sprightly old lady who went on living just to spite him. He harbored a grudge against fate and felt that it had cheated him of his natural rights. I had a strong suspicion that if it had only played fair with him, he would have been sprucing up his withered frame for a second matrimonial adventure with a charming American lass whose name he loved to drag into his conversation.

"She always made me feel young," he confided with a sly leer and a vigorous leg shaking. "Personally, I prefer young society. It puts life into me. And strangely enough, I was never conscious of age with her. Such a bright cheerful soul, she is, and a dare-devil, too, by gad."

The Englishman's "bête noir" was the American—a great husky fellow en route from Alaska to New Guinea. According to his own telling, life had been a series of tough adventures for him. Reticence never hindered him. He would spill his joys and sorrows as freely as a dog shakes water from its fur. It was also difficult not to listen, since his garrulous accounts were thundered loud enough to divide the waters.

"Can't tell me anything about life. I've taken my share of cracks, I guess. Crawled out of the gutter," he would attest proudly, quite undeterred by the glaring look on the Englishman's face which plainly inferred it had been a precious slow crawl. "From Nebraska to Alaska. Rhymes, don't it? But there ain't a hell of a lot of poetry in it, I'm telling you. No sir-eee. Tough going all the way. You mightn't believe it now by the look of me," he would thunder, with a sharp praising slap on his silk shirted chest, "but I've been a hobo in my time. Yes, sir. Many's the train I've hopped without a nickel." The silence of the company which expressed complete belief in his statement was mistaken for admiration and surprise and was followed up by further intimate revelations. "Last train I hopped, I remember, was down in Nebraska—Omaha. Good town, that, Omaha. I met my wife there, and one of the finest women you ever saw. Well set up and strong too. Seems kinda queer to me that a healthy woman like her should have gone so young. But there it is. Everything was fine and dandy until she got sick. I was doing swell in Omaha, making up to ten dollars a day, and that's mighty fine going, I'm telling you. Liquor was good business, back in prohibition days. But after she went, I jest couldn't stay put. Got ants

in my pants, I guess. That's when I got going and beat it up to Alaska."

Despite his story of struggle and worldly adventure he had preserved an amazing naiveté and occasionally, during one of his garrulous tirades, he would expose a childish simplicity that sounded incredible on his raucous lips. His wife had had red hair, too, he was constantly telling Miss Australia, accompanied by looks of sentimental admiration. The only difference about hers was that it used to grow in dark at the roots. Quite black it was sometimes, then all at once, it would be red. No reason at all. But that's the way it was. To everyone's credit, be it known that no one ever breathed a contradictory remark. The word dye was never mentioned in his presence. He was graciously permitted to cherish his illusion despite the exasperation and silent agony that his company imposed. His fellow passengers were for the most part very long suffering. They bore his repetitious anecdotes with amazing fortitude, but there came a time when ants in the pants became the ship's malady and the sight of the American's huge frame heaving into view was sufficient to send his shipmates scuttling below decks like rats evading a trap. When he discovered that his popularity was waning and that his gross stock was at a low ebb, he made a last desperate bid to recapture attention by posing as a fire-eater.

"See here," he said one night at dinner, "and I'll show you folks what we do in Alaska when times are tough. We eat fire or go hungry, and that's no kidding."

With that he produced what appeared to be a stump of candle from his pocket and setting a light to it, promptly popped it into his mouth and proceeded to work it around his jaws with great relish.

It was a nauseating sight at best, but not devoid of interest to a bored ship's company. And for a while, he enjoyed a new wave of popularity, particularly among the men passengers, as a proven fire-eater. The trick went on night after night and it was not until late in the voyage when the supply of candles ran out that the truth of the trick was discovered. The fire-eating turned out to be small pieces of banana with a thread of walnut stuck in the center of it and used as a wick. Loath to relinquish his moment of glory, he tried to continue the hoax with the aid of raw potatoes as a candle base, but the unpalatable taste proved his undoing, and alas the fire-eater went up in smoke.

Next to fire-eating he loved music best. Music meant a whole lot to him, he avowed passionately, and when Miss Australia at last grew tired of pounding out popular tunes for him on the ship's asthmatic piano, he consoled himself by playing a mouth organ.

"I can't understand folks who don't rightly appreciate good music," he would say, striking up some hackneyed popular number.

When, however, the passengers were driven beyond the limits of civility and scowled silently and sullenly at his stories of adventure, his tricks and his music, he betook himself off to the crew's quarters where night after night he beguiled the stokers with his repertoire of musical melodies. Quite often his mouth organ, accompanied by a great surge of song, would shatter the peace of the night.

But it was Spuds the potato peeler who in the end came in for most of his company, for Spuds had no earthly chance of escaping him. His place of toil was at the door of the galley and here he was compelled to stay, beside him a great bin of potatoes which had to be peeled to feed a crew of eighty men

who ate potatoes twice daily. From dawn until dark he was at his post peeling and peeling, until his thin body was curved into a question mark.

Spuds, who was fourteen, was on his first job. He was a wharf-side slum child and his new position gave him something of a home-from-home atmosphere. Hour by hour he sat in a grimy recess next to the galley door, enveloped in rancid-smelling steam that issued from the everlasting stew pots whilst he was half-buried in garbage of potato eyes and peelings. Perhaps tales of Alaska helped to while away his monotonous dreary task and bring a light of adventure into his lack-luster eyes. At all events he was compelled to listen, for like a pig in a pen, he was a prisoner, day in and day out, and an easy quarry for the garrulous American who sat for the most part swinging his long legs on the end of the potato bin.

The Swiss was the mystery passenger. He nurtured some secret grievance, mostly in secluded corners. At times, when depression proved too much for him, he would absent himself from the dining room for several meals in succession and when a ship can boast of only six passengers, one empty chair is bound to excite comment. It has a way of becoming a yawning chasm shrouded in mystery.

There was one anxious day when an ill-omen gained credence. Word was passed around that the Swiss had disappeared. No one had set eyes on him for hours, and immediately a search was instituted headed by the captain. Gloomy forebodings dogged our footsteps and the covert glances cast out to sea were expected to reveal a lifeless body floating face downward alongside. Instead of drowning, however, the Swiss appeared to have chosen burning to death, for a long search subsequently revealed him seated

on a reeking heap of tarpaulin fully exposed to the dangerous rays of the fierce tropical sun. When the captain pointed out the folly and proceeded forcibly to remove him to safety, he confounded everyone by bursting into loud sobs. A sigh of relief went up when at last the weeping Swiss was shepherded by his anxious shipmates into the safety of his cabin, and here, between liberal doses of feminine sympathy plus lavish face washings in eau de cologne and a great deal of petting and purring, he made a choking and incoherent attempt to unburden his sorrows. But told in tears and in broken English, it was a garbled and unintelligible story.

Being banished to Australia by his firm seemed to be the pivot of his distress, and circulating around him was a tattered list of grievances. Fear of estrangement from his wife; unfounded malicious slander concerning himself; a child that had been born in his absence, white night-dresses and long dark hair—obviously part of cherished memories, and all darkly interwoven with dismal forebodings. Worst of all were the hounds of all humanity—loneliness and misunderstanding.

Once the dam had burst, it welled up and threatened to submerge his sympathizers. Tears and more tears rained down his cheeks, but when the torrent had subsided and he was eventually petted and soothed back to normal, he became something of the ship's pet. Hereafter, a surreptitious watch was kept on his movements. The Swiss was everybody's business, since nobody wished for a suicide in our midst. He was never allowed to fret and fume for long hours alone and the tender ministrations produced an unsuspected cheerfulness. Before very long the Swiss had turned into a laughing, bouncing boy who was affectionately nick-named Gypsy. He still

suffered occasional lapses of depression, but they were short-lived and easily banished.

It was a strangely assorted human cargo which sailed out of New York harbor, various enough to produce an explosion at any time. A careless word or a thoughtless gesture was sufficient to cause a temperamental combustion. Consequently, tension was never thoroughly relaxed, but with all that, the ship itself was reassuring. She ploughed her way through the many changing currents with an undaunted valor. Nothing seemed to ruffle her fundamental equanimity. She took all weathers equally in her course and the engines maintained a steady heartbeat all through. An unlovely vessel was the freighter with her bulging broad beam, that looked like an overgorged matron and her grimy hull that was crying out for a coat of paint. Yet for all that, there was something of the British bulldog in her manner of progress, a tenacity of purpose in her pounding engines and unimpassioned steady course. And, once away from port, the decks were immediately spruced up and made fit for human use. Overnight, the cargo had vanished into the bowels of the ship. Great tractors, motor cars and timber en route to Australia, enough to compose a small town, were all miraculously swallowed up with ease and speed while an army of seamen with scrubbing brushes and hoses flooded and scrubbed the decks until they shone white as Dover Cliffs.

There is no hint of luxury to be found on board a freighter and least of all in the food, which at best is a succession of cold mutton, hash and stew and an occasional lump of suet pudding thrown in for good measure. But it is a ship. And if you like the cleansing taste of the elements and the intimate salt tang of the brine, the naked cover of air and sky, then a

freighter has some advantage over an ordinary liner. There are no gay awnings, no cocktail pavilions, no cozy parlor corners to snuggle into on cold days, no quiet, well-stocked library, no marble swimming baths to plunge into in hot, tropical weather. Nothing more than bare decks and a limitless heaven riding above you, and on bright nights a sky breaking blue with stars and a white lamp moon to guide the course.

Six passengers can also be infinitely more suffocating than a crowd, but there are recesses tucked away in among the ship's tangle of equipment where you can peg your claim and which by some unwritten law remain yours for duration. Also this particular freighter had one definite advantage to offer. Her course lay along the American coast and in less than a week out of New York we had come to the deep, fascinating South.

CHAPTER X

SOUTHWARD BOUND

A thick shower of coal dust issuing through the port hole plus an uncomfortable knowledge of grit in mouth and eyes announced our arrival in Savannah. Once again the freighter was fulfilling its natural mission and had crawled into a dirty water alley at the back of the slum. Quiet and order had been cast overboard and was replaced by dirt and chaos. A motley looking crowd of negroes invaded the scene. They swarmed everywhere, on the ship and wharf alike, a tattered and dirty looking crew with soot-grime showing even over their dark complexions. Numbers of them were squatting about the gangways, staring into space and looking like dark spawn that had been thrown up overnight by the yawning cadaverous pits that now occupied the space where yesterday's decks had been. Down among the coal trucks many of them, clothed in sacking, were leisurely obeying the orders of the white overseers who barked at their heels. And alongside were gangs of colored men being marshalled to load the miscellaneous cargo that was piled high and far along the wharf. A great deal of energy was required on the part of the white supervisors to infuse any show of life and motion into the southern negroes. They ambled slowly to their tasks wearing childish, happy grins and seemingly unconscious of the furious voices crackling like whips around them.

Once again the iron jaws of the derrick were at work, and great motor tractors were being lifted and

swung in mid-air, as though they were mere packets of feathers. In the midst of it all sat a large colored mammy, her red kerchief knotted over her dark, frizzy hair, and a loose, shapeless cotton garment gathered round her neck hung like a collapsed parachute about her huge body. The most positive thing about her was her smile. It lifted the broad plains of her cheeks and spread them like ravens' wings above her sparkling white teeth. She sat leisurely preparing breakfast for the men folk. On an improvised oil stove she made hot drinks that were to swill down the food stacked before her, while lazy looking negroes idled around watching her as though it were picnic fare that engaged her thick slow hands. Ever so often, one of their jokes would cause her a low chuckle and her great frame, shaking with mirth, looked like a tree quivering in the breeze.

It was difficult to realize that this lumbering, slow, sporadic scene was a part of the United States. It was such a glaring contrast to New York with its atmosphere of hustle and bristling activity where chaos is mowed down by ruthless, efficient ploughs. This time, the freighter had pushed its snub nose into a different world. It was true that the ship's arrival meant work and dollars for the impoverished and ragged wharf laborers, but they in turn had no cognizance of time. It flowed past them like a slow, tranquil river, and they were content to breast the tide and glide lazily with it, without expending one scrap of personal energy to help them forward. All the barking and the roaring of the overseers was as naught, for they only moved according to the heavy, droning momentum of the South, singing, laughing and working when the spirit moved them.

A freighter also sails without a time schedule, and since its main purpose is to collect cargo, it will re-

main in port until it has gorged every last scrap that it can swallow. Then, and only then, will it move on. Judging by the look of the wharf and the rate of progress of the negroes, it seemed as though our stay in Savannah was likely to be prolonged indefinitely.

Nor was it possible to glean a word of information on the subject. The captain and crew alike appeared to have dissolved with the dawn. Only the chief officer was visible and his bucolic scowling face was hung like a danger signal over the derrick. To have approached him with questions was to court sudden death. The only thing to do was to wander off and discover the town, trusting to luck that the ship would still be alongside, when we returned.

The way lay along desolate river-flats, marshy swamp lands for the most part and stretching as flat and far as the eye could see. And on the outskirts of the town, hugging the swamps, were negro slums of indescribable squalor. Tottering structures of gray wood, they huddled together like stricken old men in the final stages of gangrenous decay. That people actually existed in the litter of rotting timbers seemed incredible, but closer view proved that even the worst of these festering dwellings were inhabited. Broken windows and rusty hinges where doors had once been revealed people sprawling within their doomed cages. A few negroes and negresses, clutching rags about them for clothes, were squatting along the foot path, while children played in the gutters and on the adjoining wastes.

The slums of Savannah are another example of extreme social contrasts as they exist in America, the country where luxury scales to limitless heights on one hand and poverty sinks to unfathomable depths on the other. That such unbridgeable gaps should reach between wealth and poverty is an in-

dictment against those people who laud democracy and freedom at every opportunity. If the foreign agitators who come mouthing false promises and lying prophecies are to be successfully staved off, then it behooves those who scream loudest for democracy to set about condemning instead of condoning those grisly zones that make fertile breeding ground for worse evils. Throughout America similar pictures are everywhere in evidence. Side by side with wealth stalks unbelievable poverty. Every town, large and small alike, harbors dwellings that rear misshapen heads and bear blackened teeth to the beholder. They sit incongruously in the lap of a progressive nation that is abundantly endowed by nature and where all the wonders of modern civilization have come to flourish supreme.

If the slum dwellers of Savannah have any advantage over their fellows in equal plight it is due to some personal quality peculiar to themselves, an ability to smile in the teeth of adversity and a spontaneous warmth that prompts them to beam welcome to all who pass by. Smiles lined our way and we were quick to discover that the Southern negro was a different being to his northern brother. Despite the appalling evidence of poverty that is the lot of so many Southern negroes, they have nevertheless preserved a more natural mien—a childish quality that is winning and rare and somehow implicit. It is true that they know less of freedom than their northern neighbors and that they do not share quite so freely in common rights. For all that, they wear a more contented expression. Perhaps it is because their power of mimicry is less highly developed—that they have not sought to ape the white man's characteristics quite so thoroughly nor to identify

themselves with white customs and thereby sacrificed their natural heritage. Large, comforting, red-kerchiefed "Mammys" and kindly bearded "Uncle Toms" still inhabit the South, whilst there is precious little evidence of such people in the North. There they are theater figures only, hired from Harlem and dressed up to delight an audience, whereas the South still produces the genuine article.

Freedom in the North means to a large extent painting colored skins, donning freakish clothes, chewing gum and living as hard and close to the white man's example as they possibly can. The result is a distortion of type and an unbecoming veneer that serves to disguise their inherent natural grace. In the North, too, the negroes are kept continually on their toes, trying to maintain the rights and freedom that the bloody Civil War was supposed to have endowed, a freedom which is something similar to the carrot dangled before the donkey's nose. It serves to keep them tense and wary, but like the carrot, it is just that much out of reach.

For instance, away from the South, the negro is permitted entrance to the Universities, an advantage that is avidly grabbed by vast numbers of colored people. But whilst education is granted on equal terms, socially the negro is treated like a pariah on the campus. He finds that living accommodation is difficult and sometimes impossible to secure, and in any case, he must reside strictly within the negro quarters. Eating houses that cater to the students on the campus refuse for the most part to serve the negroes. At the University of Illinois, for example, conditions in this respect have been made absolute. No negro can buy food on the campus. If he would eat, then he must walk to the railway station which

is at least a mile from the campus. The same applies to all social functions. Out of the classroom, the negro is a creature apart, and strictly treated as such. Wandering singly or in isolated groups, he is a forlorn figure, particularly in a University setting.

Education, in turn, may win him prominence and renown, yet no matter how illustrious or famous his name may be, the iron-bound social rules, operating throughout America are never, under any circumstances, relaxed. At no time will a colored person be able to secure accommodation even in the meanest hotel outside of the colored quarters. This rigid principle quite often gives rise to extremely painful and awkward situations. Such as the time when a certain negro, as a visiting artist, was singing in a University town, and to a University audience. The one small hotel in town had refused him accommodation, and his choice for a night's sanctuary lay between the hospitality offered by a colored barber residing in the slum area or motoring through the night to the nearest large town, a distance of some sixty miles. He chose the latter. It is a strange reward to have offered to an artist whose musical gifts had transported the audience to ecstatic heights and left it frantically cheering in the aisles. It had acclaimed him as an artist, but socially, the barriers must be observed.

An Indian is able to protect himself against such discrimination by donning a turban. It is a strange anomaly, but a turbaned Indian will be welcomed as a guest in any hotel.

Recently Washington staged an even worse display of racial discrimination against one of America's most illustrious daughters. Miss Marion An-

derson, the colored singer, whose peerless voice has been acknowledged as one of the rare wonders of the century, was refused the use of Constitution Hall in the capital city. This followed a triumphant tour throughout the country. Telegrams of protest poured in from all quarters including one from the First Lady, but all proved unavailing. In consequence, Mrs. Roosevelt, who is a genuine and fearless champion of democracy, saw fit to resign from one of America's most exclusive and hallowed societies, the hereditary organization deemed responsible for the snub.

In the South, the negroes are compelled to toe the line and to adhere strictly to the racial theory. The government provides separate schools and cultural centers expressly for the use of the negro. Outwardly it sounds a harsh and intolerant measure, but perhaps he is better off to live and win honor among his "ain folk" than be scorned by those who prattle of equality and then revile him for reaching out his hand. One thing is definite, and that is the Southern negro has preserved his innate sense of type with which the picture-books abroad have for so long fondly identified him.

Freedom is a byword in America. It ornaments every public spoken phrase. It shakes every political platform and reverberates from every radio, but "methinks the lady doth protest too much," particularly where the lot of the negro is concerned, for he certainly is a long way off from that blessed state when he too can join in the cry.

The happy countenance of the southern negro may be a reflection of the sun-lit south itself, for Savannah is warmed and mellowed by a generous golden sun. It streams down upon the old colonial city and

lights up its countenance in smiles. On the streets and in the shops, in fact everywhere you go, the same cordial greeting is waiting. Its graciousness acts like a spellbinder, and it is quite impossible to remain immune. Charm circulates so freely that it gets into the blood. It lightens your footsteps and sends you jigging along, casting return smiles in all directions. The slow languorous South is something like an elderly duchess, who, trailing her flounces, is keeping time to a Victorian measure that has fallen two beats behind the tempo of the modern world. And the soft southern drawl and sing-song voices of the people make music after the raucous, rasping quality of New Yorkese.

Savannah is the second largest city in Georgia. It has a population of some eighty-five thousand, a comfortable quantity, which, spread out, makes it into an out-size country town. It still retains a strong colonial flavor, for having been founded before the Revolution, it is old enough to have accrued some tradition. The streets tell their own history, in the tablets and memorials that placard the city in somewhat grim procession. Sleepy looking stones, most of them draped in aged black, and leaning wearily like shriveled monks, mark a place of siege or commemorate some hero of the Civil War. For the South does not forget and is slow to forgive. The stones will remain, telling their bloody story, until the end, and there are enough of them to chasten any Yank who passes through.

In some cases, houses of historical interest have been preserved in their entirety. We lunched in one such house. The exterior was a dilapidated mass of timber. The old colonial door, rotting on its hinges, still showed where it had been riddled with shot.

There is a vicious pleasure and smouldering resentment in the voices of the guides who reveal the history.

"Yankee bullets, yes ma'am, and there they be to this very day."

The house that had been a place of siege during the Civil War is now a charming public restaurant. The rooms are still intact, and the interior furnishings are all carried out in true southern style, as was the delicious food that was served to us. Real southern fried chicken was here at last, together with all its finery and trimmings, hot corn rolls included, and exuding an aroma that set the gastric juices purring in content. Lettuces, crisp as morning, were heaped with ripe fruits and salad ingredients so perfectly blended that they breathed a spring song at your right hand. Fresh Georgia peaches and ice cream, as only the Americans know how to make, fragrant coffee as smooth as velvet, all provided a delightful and unforgettable repast that seemed strangely incongruous with the bullet-ridden front door.

One of the main places of interest apart from the town itself, is the cemetery. It is a queer place to go in search of beauty, and when the Swiss returned from a visit, chanting a paeon of praise, we turned skeptical glances upon him. I, for one, nurtured a secret idea of his having repaired to a cemetery to unburden his miseries among the tombstones. But he stuck to his point. It was really picturesque, he declared, and was insistent that we all go along to see. Hailing a car, he bundled us all inside, and like the grave-digger-in-chief, the Swiss took over the guide duties.

Once arrived at the scene, however, his broad beam of "I told you so" was amply justified. The Savan-

nah cemetery has nothing whatsoever in common with the usual variety, where neat, white tablets stand up like soldiers in a trim row. Here the graves rove carelessly over a large, natural forest setting, and the stones showing in odd recesses suggest a comfortable nap in some favorite corner. Under a shady tree or in an inglenook of verdant green; down in a sheltered dell or up on a hill to enjoy the view. Casually they have fallen asleep, and each lies dreaming in its own chosen reserve. Trees that are as old as time itself, reach stalwart, protective arms over the sleepers. Forest grandeur presides over all. Avenues of giants stride majestically up hill, and parting company, they range far and wide, unveiling beauty in their wake. To enhance this scrap of paradise, is the Spanish moss, a gray, fibrous weed that feasts upon the trees. It encircles vast trunks and winds over branches until the green giants are festooned with hazy clouds of gray fleece, and where the trees have formed an avenue, the moss has scaled the road and draped a lofty curtain that hangs like fairwoven stalactites. The Savannah cemetery is a place of perpetual twilight, with sunlight filtering through. Here the vesper hour lingers on, and to stand amid the forest of misty gray fleece and to look out from the hilltop at the golden sun, safe in its eternal heaven, is to touch the hem of the ineffable peace that enshrines the sleepers.

Prompted by a sudden impulse to take away some tangible fragment of this limpid, peace-bathed scene, I stole a tiny scrap of the gray moss. It would grow on any tree, I was told, but after cherishing it half way across the ocean, I cast it out to sea. It could never look the same elsewhere, I decided. Growing in some foreign garden, it would be an interloper, no

more than a curious weed. I could hear faint voices slightly mocking murmuring in my ear, "Really, how very strange! Rather grim, creepy looking stuff, don't you think?" And by such, my own indelible mind-picture might possibly fade and die. It could never hallow another precinct as it did the sleepers' sanctuary.

The Southern negroes were three whole days loading the freighter. A good deal of the time they seemed to be sitting down beside the cargo. They rested, sang and laughed between each spurt of labor, and to watch their idea of work was to view an actual slow motion picture reel, but no one seemed to mind, least of all the passengers. Savannah had been a pleasant interlude. Long hours of sunshine, delicious food, interesting items of history gathered en route, sing-song voices that turned "ye'es ma'am" into a lilting melody. Gracious people, with courteous old-world manners, and the friendliest of policemen, solicitous creatures who showed a fatherly concern for travelers. If you approach one with a question as to direction, you are likely to find yourself picked up and taken straight to the place.

All in all, the three days ashore were a blessed relief, and went a long way toward restoring good humor. Tempers were generally set fair, and when at last the freighter, looking more like a buxom matron than ever, had gathered up the last of her parcels, she set her bulging hips upon the sea, and we settled down to a few more days of fair sailing that brought us to the last scrap of America that we were to see on the journey. Heading south, we came to the tropical Panama Canal Zone, an outpost of American domination, and seated on the edge of what was again an entirely different world.

We arrived at the Canal Zone late in the evening. It was to be a moderately brief visit, since we had only stopped for coal. The anchor was dropped some little distance from the shore, and quite soon after, a slick little motor launch, operated by a small gnome-like Indian, came alongside to take those passengers ashore who wished to go up and view the sights of the poetic sounding Cristobal. But any place less aptly named would be impossible to imagine. "Hell's Corner" would be a much truer tag of identification. For Cristobal turned out to be one of the most vice-ridden spots on earth—a cancerous growth spewed up by the Canal.

The Panama Canal Zone is a subdivided territory. One part of the small town, named Colon, is owned by Panama, whilst the other part, which is Cristobal, is under American domination. To this divided area have teemed all the vice-sodden dregs of humanity. The main industry of the place is prostitution and a thriving one too, judging from the way it leers from every doorway and trails its filthy skirt from end to end of every street, catering mostly to the sailors who compose the bulk of the shifting population.

The freighter passengers had joined "en famille" for the trip ashore, having first been gruffly warned by the captain, "You'd better all keep together if you're going. It isn't the best place on the globe to get lost in."

And right he was. It was the one and only occasion throughout the voyage when the six passengers huddled together and tripped over each other's heels fearful to lose sight of anyone, even for an instant, for danger seemed to lurk in every footstep. All things were possible in the dimly-lighted streets with

the narrow black alleyways jutting out at unexpected places. A stab in the back, a pistol shot, kidnapping even, anything vicious and terrible. A few gift shops were still open when we arrived—Indian-owned stores for the most part, and presided over by obsequious coffee-colored people from the West Indies. Their merchandise was chiefly of eastern variety, goods collected from China, Japan, India, Panama, with a moderate assortment of American gewgaws thrown in and a sprinkling of English Birmingham junk. But it was all set out in Oriental style and cunningly arrayed to charm the dollars from those novices who roamed in foreign ports.

We went leisurely from shop to shop looking over the goods and buying a few trinkets here and there for the want of something better to do. The shops seemed to be the safest place to be in. The streets were ominously quiet. They filled you with a sense of lurking treachery that even the blooming hibiscus showing pallid night faces could not dispel.

Night life in Cristobal is centered in night clubs and cabarets, and when dark steals down upon the town, they blaze into life and set up a jangling grind. A whole chain of them lines one street and runs down part of another—tawdry resorts that are open all night and feature continuous shows of burlesque, strip-tease, and dancing. Anything and everything is there to lure visitors within.

Since some of our party were anxious to taste the city's attractions, I was compelled to follow at their heels into what had been recommended as the best and most fashionable cabaret in Cristobal. Garish on the outside, it was a reeking gin palace within. A craven and hideous mixture of humanity was sprawling over tables and swarming around the bar consuming liquor. In another room, the burlesque show

was in progress, and here we went to group ourselves around a table to view the show. Safety in numbers was for once a comforting homily, for anything more crude and vicious than the spectacle before us was impossible to imagine.

A small roped-off square in the center of the room provided the stage, and here the burlesque artists performed their odious antics. The first turn was a colored woman. She sang a coarse song accompanied by lewd gestures, a ribald affair that brought hoots of laughter from the crowded audience. Next came a weedy-looking white girl, little more than a child, who obliged with a fan dance, an unskilled performance that was calculated to excite the onlookers by the gauche exposure of her naked form. Several such second-rate turns followed in quick succession, but the highlight of the show was the strip-tease artist—a tall, heavily-painted blonde who pranced back and forth, discarding garments as she went, until her nakedness was fully revealed. Cheers and more cheers greeted this climax. Roar after roar went up from the onlookers who for the most part were sailors. A degrading spectacle at best, but one that was increased a thousand fold before a colored audience. Between the acts the ladies of easy virtue paraded the tables, openly accosting any likely looking male. There were literally dozens of them, and each was clothed in one garment, that was a brief apology for an evening dress, and draped as snug as elastic to reveal all curves and bulges. A heinous crowd of vultures they were, and color ran the gamut among them. There were pure whites and blacks, half-castes of both, Chinese and Chinese-Indians, half Chinese and half Spanish, Spanish and half negroes—every conceivable mixture ranged the room. Devil's spawn, all of them, and the lowest possible

dregs at that, trading in debauchery to any slight bidder.

The effect upon the ship's company varied. The Swiss, who was warmed through by several neat brandies, watched it all with feverish eyes and scarlet cheeks. Miss Australia sat with a sophisticated look that implied she knew her world. The hatchet-jaw of the Oxford don had dropped open wide, a little dribble of saliva oozed down his parchment chin, and his gaunt frame was a trembling jelly. Strangely enough, the weepy spinster was looking more composed than she had been in days. Her sallow face cupped in her hands, she wore an absorbed and gloating expression. The American had fallen into utter silence. For once the garrulous well had completely dried up, and he sat like a graven image, his eyes registering shock and disgust. Whatever his past adventures may have been, they were obviously nothing like this. Nor was he enjoying a vicarious thrill from the scene of degradation. Instead, his innate simplicity, that naive streak in his makeup that led him to extravagant and childish exhibitions, was deeply shocked. And when I turned to him and suggested that we move on, he sprang up with alacrity, and refused absolutely to be persuaded by the Swiss's plea that there was no need to hurry. An enormous American naval policeman, carrying a truncheon, was on duty close to our table. I asked him if this were the best of the night resorts in town.

"Well, if there's such a thing as best, maa'm, then I guess it is, but they're all lousy, every damned one of them."

And, in answer to my look of horror, he went on,

"And if you think this is bad, then you ain't seen nothin'. You ought to take a look at some of the side streets." He spat as he spoke.

It was not until the party had pushed their heads into two other such dens just to be quite sure that they were all of a kind, that we eventually made our way back to the freighter. The moonlit stretch of water that led back to the ship was a heavenly cleansing sight after the Hell's Corner that we had left behind. It seems a terrible pity that the entrance to the canal should be through such a pit of reeking iniquity. It serves to besmirch the flawless panorama of beauty that the Canal affords, a gateway of loveliness that leads to the Ocean, just as it defiles the memory of those men who planned one of the greatest of all wonders of this age.

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CHAPTER XI

PORTS OF CALL

Whether it was a wish fulfillment or the hand of destiny at work, I do not know, but in less than six months of life in Australia, I was once more packing bags and making ready for a journey to the United States. This time, however, the trip had a more permanent aspect, since I was to leave in the company of my husband who was assigned to a new appointment at Indiana University in the small and little-known town of Bloomington.

America had left me restless and unsettled. True, I had brought back an unusually mixed store of impressions. I could wear a sprig of travel in my coat, ornament conversation with adventure, and still have things in plenty to ruminate on for a long time hence. But even so there was a gap. Looking back, it seemed that I had but skimmed the surface. With the exception of Chicago, I had toured only the coast of America and visited only those places that loomed foremost in the traveler's itinerary. I soon began to feel too much like the average tourist who gloats on surface values and passes judgment superficially, losing sight of the fact that I had spent more months getting to know America than the average tourist spends days, hurrying through, and offering praise and condemnation as he goes.

I missed the vast tapestry of life that is America, the kaleidoscopic scene with its swift change of faces and custom, the bright busy medley of people who compose the nation and enrich living by the preser-

vation of their numerous cultures brought from all Europe. Australia seemed dull and commonplace in comparison. The people were too much alike, growing up like a corn field, even and in rows. So that when word came to move on, I for one set out jubilantly, particularly since the forthcoming journey would take us far beyond the usual tourist haunts, and set us down in the actual blood-stream of America itself, for Indiana, which is the heart of the great Mid-west, would reveal the very pulse of the nation.

Neither of us knew anything of our destination. Martin had glanced at it briefly on his way through, having paused there for a few hours to interview the University president, and to arrange for his official headquarters. He described what he had seen of Bloomington as a typical American small town, with the University campus an added embellishment.

Fortunately the California shipping strike had been amicably settled, and the Matson-Oceanic line had renewed its regular service. This enabled us to cross by a different route and view the Pacific spots of American colonization.

The *S.S. Mariposa* was a full ship, the passengers being mostly Americans who were spending their summer vacation on a trip from California to Australia and back. The tour had attracted all manner of people from different parts of the States, so that here again we had a close-up view of Americans at play on board an American liner.

Among the assortment of passengers were several bulging millionnaires from California who declaimed loud and often on God's own country where oranges, film stars, and oil wells grow up and prosper.

"Australia's all right," one of them told me, with a look that resembled a condescending pat on the back. "But why, for pity's sake, don't they get busy

down there and do things with a country like that? The cities are fine enough to look at, but cold, ohhhh! my, but I was never so cold in all my life. They could sure use some heat turned on down there in winter."

"Perhaps they prefer to remain Spartan," I suggested. "The British are rather given that way, you know."

"Well, I guess they must be. No good to me, though, I'm telling you. They got plenty room down there too," he went on. "Too much of it I guess. What they need most is people to get it going. Why, half that continent is just going to waste. Just look, now, at what we've done right there in California!"

"But then California is God's own country, you say," I interrupted.

"It sure is all that, but God got plenty help in building it up, I'm telling you."

On the whole, Australia, and particularly New Zealand, had found favor in the tourists' sight. One and all, they were enthusiastic about the spruce and clean cities, and particularly on the garden effects that prevailed everywhere. The major complaint to be heard on all sides was the cold. Deprived of their habitual interior heating system, most of the tourists described themselves as being shriveled and frozen during the stay in the Australian hotels. There was also a large grouch concerning the coffee.

"We just had to drink tea down there," one woman whined. "The coffee was just awful, and the stuff they served up as tea was black as night. They must have awful strong stomachs, I guess, the way they keep swallowing that stuff."

There was one man who described his trip through New Zealand as "a bowl and pitcher tour." At first I was mystified, and it was Martin who explained

that he was referring to the wash basins in the hotel bedrooms.

"Gee, but I thought those things were dead and gone," he said. "I'll bet New York just couldn't produce one if it tried. I never saw one outside of a museum. Real cute, some of them, and no kidding. If I'd had room, I believe I would have brought one back as a memento."

Several among them were scathing on the Australian dialect. The most amusing piece of criticism came from a woman, a native of Arkansas, whose own pronunciation kept me on my toes, listening to discover whatever it was that she was saying.

"Such English," she scoffed. "It's about the worst kinda talk I ever did hear. They sure know how to twist words up down there. It's kinda queer the way they have of saying simple English. Why, they've never gotten to know the language!"

"Were you able to make yourself understood?" I asked her.

"Well, I guess not. I never got to know what it was all about."

Intermixed with the millionaires and the more prosperous tourists was a lynx-eyed group of school teachers, who had invested in the trip to gain knowledge, and a husband where possible. Off guard, they were an intense and serious band of females who scooped up every stray item of travel lore and diligently marked it up in a travel log book. They appeared in a body each morning after breakfast, and ensconced in a straight line of deck chairs they each proceeded to write down the smallest happenings. The only time that the travel lust waned was when a likely figure of romance appeared on deck. Then all at once the diaries were thrust out of sight and replaced with a burst of alluring smiles that was cal-

culated to halt the trousered figure's progress. That he never made the distance was a fore-gone conclusion, for there was always one more aggressive among them who would rise up and seize him.

Ornamenting the passenger list were the names of two famous theatre artists. Curiously, they were both women and both past middle age; one a British idol of vaudeville fame, the other an American, equally renowned, but who caters to a more exclusive public. For some reason or other, they fell shy of each other, and a week at least had elapsed before they were on speaking terms.

"Do tell me," said the American one day when we were a few days out of port, "I'm curious about this English woman who is on board. People speak as though I ought to know her. Is there any good reason why I should? I mean, who is she, exactly?"

I explained the best I could the fond regard that her colleague enjoyed throughout Britain, knowing full well that she knew all about her, and more than I could ever tell her.

"What I would like to know," the little English artist remarked later, "is something more about this Yankee dame. She's a hoity-toity if ever I saw one. Talk about a hand brake, she keeps it on all right. I never heard of her myself until I saw her billed in Melbourne a few weeks ago."

"She's a world-renowned artist," I said, trying to force a confession. "You simply must have heard of her. Her fame is legion throughout America and England."

"That's as it may be," she returned in a voice that was sharp as cider. "But it doesn't mean a thing to me, dearie. I have played every worthwhile hall in the States, and topped every bill in England, and believe me, I've never heard of her before."

The great difference between the two women was their approach to age. The English woman was proud of her long and established record, and exhibited no fear of her diminishing popularity. Her short white head of hair looked as trim as a college girl, while her figure and vivacity were a perpetual source of wonder in a woman who boasted of having passed more than sixty summers, whereas the American woman was hounded by fear. Her public appeal was far more subtle than the English woman's. Her success depended on the whims of more critical audiences, and her days were spent reviling and brooding over her fickle public. Any day, she feared, they were likely to desert her. Her whole existence depended upon applause and praise, and without manifestation of it, she was desolated. Her art was still intact, but with age her self-confidence was waning. It was possibly due to this constant and growing anxiety that the ship was treated to an unusual concert, headed by two world-famed personalities.

"Oh, dear," the American sighed to me one day when I met her emerging from the purser's office. "But truthfully, I get so little peace. People make the most incredible demands. Really, no one ever thinks that an artist needs any rest. Now the purser is plaguing me to give a recital. I really don't know. I suppose it would be ungracious to refuse, since the proceeds would go to the Seamen's Fund. One hates to fall short. Tell me, what do you think? Should I give a recital?" she asked with an arch smile that did not disguise the iron will that was working to bring the concert about. "This English woman," she mused. "Do you suppose she should be consulted? I haven't the least idea of her work. The purser mentioned her. She might not fit in so well, but since

she is on board she might care to contribute something to the program."

"She could scarcely be ignored," I remarked dryly.

"Of all the sauce I ever heard, that Yank takes the biscuit!" the vaudeville artist exclaimed, when she first heard of the proposed concert. "Bless my soul, if she hasn't been to the purser and got him to arrange a show for her. Now, if you please, I am asked to fill in the program, and I don't so much as know the woman. Like her damned cheek, I call it. Who the hell she thinks she is, I'd like to know."

Nevertheless, it was the concert that served to bring theatre and vaudeville together, for as the appointed day approached, common interests proved too much for them. Each was anxious to discover what the other had in mind, and so take precautions not to be over-shadowed by any surprise performance.

When, at last, the eagerly awaited hour dawned, it was the vaudeville star who first graced the stage. Taking the many disadvantages in her stride, she borrowed a top hat and walking stick and when the acoustics failed her, she filled in the gaps with experienced twirls and flourishes. Discarding the stage as useless, her pert little figure pranced up and down on the audience level, delighting all by singing many old-time favorites and inviting them to join in the choruses. Her hearty and accomplished performance and clever impersonations put the passengers into an excellent mood to enjoy the "piece-de-resistance" of the evening.

But when the classic entertainer stepped onto the stage, conditions seemed to conspire against her. For one thing, the stage, that was shaped like a bell, succeeded in concealing far better than it revealed,

and the great artist, sitting in a far corner, appeared to a large portion of the audience as a headless body talking at the ceiling. Her keen intuitive sense must have divined something of the sort, for she stopped abruptly after a few sentences to inquire if she could be seen. And when a loud, resounding "No," was flung at her, she immediately gave up the sketch in favor of one that brought her to the edge of the stage. This time she chose a whimsical Irish interpretation, one that was lightly threaded with humor. But as the acoustics were the worst possible, the gems of dialect floated aloft and were lost in the ether. And the perfect timing, the fruit of long experience, that allowed for the laughs, proved awkward and disconcerting blank silences, both for the artist and the audience. The beautiful voice and flawless inflections were barely audible. To increase further the prevailing difficulties, a strong wind suddenly blew up, and tearing through the ship's lounge, it scattered every movable object in its wake. For what seemed an interminable interval, the sketch was again interrupted, while people sought to recover wraps and various floating gear. A great deal of scuffling ensued, while windows and doors were being locked. None of which helped to create harmony for the artist. So much so, that when the ill-fated performance came to an end, the volume of well-deserved applause was considerably diminished owing to many hands being occupied with scarves and evening paraphernalia that threatened to blow away.

We approached the "Great Ones" slowly, fearful to rush in with the wrong word and uncomfortably conscious of the many disturbing elements that had marred an incomparable performance. But rather to our surprise, the American was evading her usual

companions, and was allowing herself to be led away arm in arm by the Variety star.

"That was a grand performance, dearie," I heard the English woman consoling her colleague. "The best work I've seen in many a day. It fairly knocked me over. Beautiful, I call it. Much too good for here, though. And what you had to put up with. I doubt if a brass band could be heard in there."

When I last saw them that evening they were in deep conclave, hidden in the back lounge, a bottle of stout before the vaudeville queen, while the American artist was sipping what looked like a comforting John Collins.

II

The American on holiday is not a jovial person. He appears to approach his pleasures in the same weighty manner that he does his work. Leisure is strange to him, and with time on his hands, he looks restless and ill at ease. The British, for all their reserve, know far more about play time and how to make good use of it, particularly on a long voyage, than do their American neighbors. Relaxation to the average American means doing something else with equal seriousness, a state induced and maintained by will power rather than a process of nature. Then again the American prefers to have his pleasures arranged and catalogued for him by a travel expert. And he will then proceed to do what he is bidden in a sheep-like manner, because it is something he has paid for and is a routine part of the trip. Consequently, there is little or no spontaneous fun on board an American liner. On the contrary, pastimes are set to a curriculum that is as dull as it is monotonous.

During the three weeks that we were at sea, the amusement program never varied. Every alternate night the lounge was packed to capacity with people to play Keno, and the next night they trooped back to the same place to view a film. There were no such diversions as a fancy dress ball, a treasure hunt or a mock auction, or any one of the more spontaneous pastimes that are familiar happenings on a British ship during a long voyage.

Formality is another troublesome demand to the American tourist, and when occasion requires his formal presence he sits around looking extremely tense and awkward, like a child at a party minding his "P's" and "Q's." Coffee served in the lounge after lunch and dinner is not an institutional part of American ship life, and this interlude at sea, when friendships grow up and prosper on board a British vessel, is unknown to the American counterpart. The American prefers to wash down his meal with a breakfast size cup of coffee which he swallows at the dinner table, repairing to the lounge afterwards to continue his aimless search for the next thing to do.

3

Sunshine graced the entire voyage, and when the ship steamed out of Sydney harbor in mid-winter, the sun pouring down was as warm and penetrating as that of any English June day at its best. The surrounding green and sandy inlets were a circle of bright sparkling gems that looked too good to be left behind.

In New Zealand the same warm spell prevailed. We met a sun so perfect that after a full day of sight-seeing we left Auckland with a deep sigh of regret.

It appeared a place of green enchantment. Enshrined by mountains, it is so friendly and compact that you want to stroke it in passing. A hint of England lurks in the atmosphere that is calm, unhurried, and strangely contented. From the heights of Titarangi, a name meaning "the edge of the white cloud," we looked out upon a tranquil and green-crested beauty. Below us was the ocean where blue inlets encircled by green hills were translucent, shining pools. The peace-bathed scene was a refreshing draft that left us relaxed and content to bide in its beauty until the next port was reached.

Our greatest regret was that we had no snapshots to commemorate the day, but when it comes to remembering equipment, Martin is very much the absent-minded professor. The camera languished in the cabin, for the most part, while we went sight-seeing, and whenever we came upon an unusual beauty spot, Martin invariably emerged, dreamy-eyed, from a spell of admiration to demand the camera, as though he expected me to produce it from the toe of my shoe. He always meant to take it with him, of course, and it was always immediately under his nose for him to pick up. There was one occasion when he went back to fetch it, and came hurrying onto the departing launch with a fresh pipeful of tobacco instead. After New Zealand, he bought a case with a strap attached so that he could sling it tourist-fashion over his back. But, alas, his back was no brighter at remembering than his front, and the only advantage of the strap was that the camera, now hung up behind his dressing gown, had a dark comfortable corner to itself to sleep in.

Suva was the next port en route. It is a busy little spot, an outpost of British colonization, and is made up of a conglomeration of people. The Fijians pre-

dominate, a stocky and powerfully built race, very black, with wild upstanding, golly-wog mops of hair. So far as wharf labor is concerned, they dispose of cargo in double quick time that puts the Southern negroes to shame. As a race, they are fierce-looking people with small claim to beauty. The Fijian women, however, supplement their charms by dyeing their thick shocks of hair into flaming shades of scarlet. It creates an incongruous spectacle, blazing away from coal black skins and short, squat necks, and a group of women in conclave, seen from a distance, resembles a traveling bush fire.

There is also a fairly large Indian population, and these slim, coffee-colored people mingling between, with quiet grace and ready smiles, provide a refined contrast to the natives. A liberal sprinkling of Chinese and some two thousand white people make up the pure breeds, but the largest element in Suva by far are the half-castes, and here color runs riot. From varying shades of pale cream to tan, some boasting even blue eyes, to piebald examples that comprise every conceivable race and shade, many of them appearing to embody a dark league of nations within themselves, but since they all reside in harmony, and calm prevails on the island, it is fair to assume that Suva is a satirical answer to the European bug of racial purity.

From the sea, Suva presents a rugged picture of beauty. Great jagged mountains stride out of the water like a band of flint-faced warriors, aloof and recondite, but inland, away from the small and uninteresting town, the scene is surprisingly green and cool. The hill country is covered with luxuriant and prolific growth, that is lush and green, while everywhere are flaming patches of tropical color.

From a native aspect, however, Suva has little of interest to offer. The few Fijian villages that remain are preserved more to attract the tourist than by native custom. Interbreeding has destroyed the natural primitive design, and as a whole, with its conglomerate people, it is a sophisticated version only, of what you might expect to find in a native port.

According to many Americans on board, Pago Pago was the high-light of the trip from the tourist angle.

"I jest can't wait to get there," one California woman confided to me. "I told hubby on the way down, that if I slept for the rest of the journey and woke up in time to see Pago Pago on the way back then I sure would have seen plenty. I'll say it's beautiful. And if you've never seen it, honey, then you sure have a treat waiting. Why, the villages are so primitive, you can't imagine. Dancing and singing are all so natural, just exactly like it was before we white folks got around to it. And don't forget to take a look at Sadie Thompson's birthplace while you're there."

"Birthplace?" I gasped, unable to realize that my informant was being serious. "You mean . . ."

"I mean just that, honey. It's right there on the island. You can't possibly miss it, only a few steps from the wharf, and you can see just where she was born and raised."

Surprise prevented me from daring contradiction, besides which it seemed unnecessary deliberately to destroy something that she obviously cherished as truth. To her, Sadie Thompson was a living personality. She did not think of her as a creature of fiction, and a brain child of Somerset Maugham's. So much for the power of the pen, for, strange as it sounds, Sadie Thompson has assumed living shape

for many of the tourists who pass through Samoa, while Somerset Maughan's name is never mentioned. She has even come to overshadow Robert Louis Stevenson, who died in Samoa. Today, Sadie Thompson lords it over them all. The tumble-down wooden shack where the play was possibly conceived has become a tourist shrine. It is her birthplace and island home, and hers is the shining hour.

From the sea, Pago Pago was all and more than was described. Emerging out of a rosy dawn, it resembled a green gem that had dropped out of a tranquil sky, a spearhead of beauty enhanced by surrounding peaks of shining green.

The ship was anchored half a mile away, and in the distance the shore ran like a golden scarf at the foot of the sharp hills. Palm trees leaned lazily along the water's edge, and here and there, gliding on blue waters, was a sampan manned by a native figure that shone like a stem of copper.

Pago Pago, which is in American Samoa, is a naval base, and apart from the small naval settlement, and the missionaries, it has few white settlers. As a piece of colonization, America has done an excellent job. Flawless white roads pave the green island, modern American homes are settled along the seashore, and motor cars fit back and forth on the roads. A galaxy of material assets, yet deeper down, beneath the surface, there is evidence of a physical crumbling, and to me the Samoans of Pago Pago appeared as a dying civilization. The natives are an apathetic group of people, devoid of animation, and made to look more melancholy by a dread eye disease that seems to afflict every second one of them. Then there are those among them who are stricken with elephantiasis, a gross swelling of the limbs that makes for unsightly distortion. Only the very young,

the striplings, seem to preserve the grace and charm that is commonly associated with the Polynesian race. Age swoops down cruelly. It sits heavily upon their shoulders, bringing with it swift and oftentimes hideous diseases.

We went out to see the native village, a much advertised trip to view the dancers in their primitive environment. The village consists of a few native huts, and in the largest of them, the dancers give their performance. This consists of a series of gymnastics that includes much vigorous slapping of the back and chest, and accompanied by a lot of high-pitched squealing. Most of the dances are performed squatting on floor mats. The primitive effect is considerably heightened by a Samoan who sits in the forefront banging away on an empty Texaco petrol can that does duty for a drum, whilst the dance interpreter passes round a collection plate that has a dollar bill neatly plastered to the bottom as an encouragement to generous largesse.

As the *Monterey* and *Mariposa* are the only two passenger ships calling at the island, the two days of call per month are declared a public holiday. This enables the natives to put down tools and rake in an excellent day's profit by entertaining the wide-eyed and gullible tourists and by the sale of native basketware. The village dances, however, are by far the most lucrative source of revenue. They cost nothing at all to promote, and are being preserved entirely on a commercial basis. In the compound, surrounding the dance house, roam numerous natives selling postcards and imported souvenirs, while others group themselves, ready for the camera, but taking good care to spring aside unless fifty cents is tendered first for the privilege of snapping a picture.

Pago Pago has also been a happy hunting ground for the missionaries. Various denominations have come and set up their churches and missions on the island, and have embarked on a competitive drive for souls.

Two small boys, brothers, and alike as two peas, attached themselves to us along the road. After a diligent spurt of begging, which was without results, they slipped a confiding hand in ours, and began to ply us with questions of religion. One was anxious to know if we had seen the Catholic church, and when we replied in the affirmative, the other promptly asked if we had seen the Mission, at which we nodded again.

"I am a Catholic," one said proudly. "See my sign." He pointed to a small charm that was hanging round his neck.

"I'm not. I'm a Methodist," chanted the other with a sidelong glance. "It's nice, too," he added brightly, as though he were speaking of something to eat, and perhaps to cover up the absence of a sign.

"Where's your sign?" demanded the Catholic child of me.

"I haven't got one," I replied, at which he looked crestfallen.

"Doesn't your religion have a sign?" he persisted.

"No, I'm afraid that it doesn't." His face darkened in surprise. Here were white people, distributors of new religions, and not a sign to show for themselves.

It was more repelling than amusing to find these two small urchins, accomplished beggars both of them, each swearing allegiance to separate branches of Christianity without the least knowledge or understanding of either. It is small wonder that

under such circumstances, Christianity loses prestige among the colored races, spreading as it does, a divided gospel. In the case of the two children, it was like hewing a tree in half.

The Samoans enjoy the reputation of a happy, carefree people, but to me they appeared inanimate and unhealthy, a discovery that rather shattered a long-cherished idea, for they presented a denial to the concept of where beauty is, beauty will grow up and flourish. So far as Nature is concerned, Pago Pago is a treasure trove, an island endowed with the abundant gifts of beauty. Food is showered upon the islanders; coconuts, bread fruit, and bananas, are all there for the taking, while in the sea, fish teem galore. It is almost as if Nature is on a rampage, and is slowly devouring those who feast on her gifts, for there is an obvious seeping of vitality among these islanders, a dying splendor that is also not being aided by white penetration. The imposition of white civilization and foreign customs, bringing with them all the material contraptions of the modern world, are doing their part to destroy the physical and spiritual integrity of the native population. The advent of dollars, for instance, has created a money consciousness on the island and today new wants and cravings are manifest. Money has also destroyed a natural spontaneity. For what was once a proud ceremony, a garland fête and dance given in honor of some noble Polynesian chief, a native custom rich in legend, has today become a series of spurious and mechanical antics that are put on to delight those tourists who revel in the dash of the primitive, and are willing to pay cash for the privilege.

As the ship pulled away in the high noon, Pago Pago was a green silhouette of unbelievable beauty, sharp and green as a glistening spearhead, yet as I

watched it drop into the sea and become lost, I remembered that I had not seen a bird or heard a single note of song. Nor was there anywhere evidence of cultivation. Nature flames and dies untended, bestowing abundance in season and out.

My thoughts of the island are always dominated by two figures, a man and a woman who performed weird gyrations of the dance with loose, sagging mouths, and staring straight before them with a milk-white agate eye apiece. Round their necks hung withered flowers, and whenever their eyes were turned upon me, they seemed to be sightless and accusing. It was as though I had watched a desecration of some mystic rite that was performed for cash by dead men decked up in their own funeral wreaths.

Five lazy days under a tropical sweltering sun brought us into Honolulu. It is ideally situated, and viewed from the sea, it has every appearance of an enchanted isle. A circle of green hills hugs the bay. Undulating and gentle looking, they rise majestically against the vivid blue sky, while sandy inlets and waving palm trees dot the landscape. In the distance, a little removed from the town, is the Royal Hawaiian Hotel, looking exactly like a sumptuous wedding cake that has been freshly iced over in pink, and set down by the ocean to cool.

Honolulu is termed by Americans as the show spot of the Pacific, a title that is substantiated both by nature and the modern promoters of spectacular effect. The ship's arrival was greeted by a fanfare of music, and a lusty singing of Polynesian folk songs ensued. These, at least, served to remind you of the place where the true Hawaiian people once held sway. Today, however, the bandsmen and singers have discarded their native costumes, in favor of spotless white uniforms, and when the native songs

have been duly rendered, the band presents a very rousing version of American swing music.

No sooner has the ship docked than the decks are besieged with flower sellers. They swarm over the vessel, their arms burdened with floral leis, necklets that are composed of flower petals, so intricately and delicately woven that they appear to have grown that way. Perfume steals up and haunts you from the moment of arrival, for Honolulu is a flower-decked city, and the very air is drenched with fragrance. It weaves an intoxicating spell that is something like a potent opiate—disposing of reason, it infects you with a festive and holiday spirit.

Gaiety and light-heartedness pervade the atmosphere, and it is difficult indeed to realize the havoc that white civilization has wrought in the island. Perhaps it is that progress and cultivation have drawn a kindly veil over the valley of destruction, for the true Hawaiian, strong in his original grace, has almost ceased to exist. Today, Honolulu is finding a new population. A large colony of industrious Japs and Chinese dominate the scene. They are a picturesque people, small and virile looking, and pattering through the streets wearing bright kimonos, slant-eyed and perpetually smiling, they add an Eastern glow to the exotic city. But greater still, are the number of half-castes, graceful people who reveal a medley of all, cherishing the delicate beauty and cast of features of the original native Hawaiians who were once the aristocrats of the Polynesian race.

The natural island scene has been completely transformed by American colonists, and the impact of progressive enterprise has made Honolulu a prosperous replica of any of the fashionable cities to be found within the United States. A complete affinity exists between the island and the mainland, and the

five days' ocean journey that divides it from the States is bridged by the constant flow of Americans to their beloved playground.

Gay as peacocks are the hotels, preening their plumage by the water's edge, most of all the famous Royal Hawaiian. Painted a sugary pink, and slashed with oriental trimmings, it is set down in the midst of a luxuriant garden, in which the panoply of color is supplemented by masses of tropical plants.

We enjoyed the luxury of lunching at this mecca of the world's plutocracy. As we sat in the shade of its magnificent terrace, reveling in the choicest foods of the island, we gazed dreamily at the golden sands of Waikiki beach, which presented an unforgettable picture of pampered luxury, with overworked film stars and jaded millionaires basking in the brilliant Hawaiian sunshine.

Walking along the beach, we had to step warily, lest we disturb any of the inert throng that were packed close as sardines, and pillowed on soft mattresses, under the protection of gay striped umbrellas. Teams of beach boys, bronzed as statues, hovered solicitously, ready to jump at the least bidding of this rare type of fragility. Over-fed stomachs rose like yeast loaves in the warm sun, while many a film star, whose face was her fortune, protected her beauty under a hat that was a small tent, and masked her features behind goggles the size of a wind screen.

Yet despite a certain Hollywood artifice, and the invasion of commercial enterprise, the rich sap of the island itself cannot be understated. Vegetation and fragrance are profuse. Science and cultivation have brought them into line, pruning back wild growth until all have reached the zenith of fulfillment. The

streets are lined with trees, so heavy with blossoms that the air is drenched with perfume.

Perhaps it is the flower-laden atmosphere that makes for sadness in parting, and when the ship pulled away, an uncomfortable lump rose in my throat. The same musicians who had greeted us were on the wharf to bid us farewell with the haunting song of Aloha. The waters became a shrine of floating flowers, as lei after lei was cast overboard. There is a saying in the islands that if your lei reaches the shore it is a sign that you will return. I watched my five, six, seven leis, circling in the small eddies of the ship's current, whirling and twisting like live things, then forming circles, and heading for the shore. But as the ship gathered speed and swung her nose into the open ocean, I lost sight of the floral emblems which were swallowed up by the swift dusk and formed part of the magic circle that is Honolulu.

CHAPTER XII

CROSS COUNTRY

As the ship drew into Los Angeles and the moment for disembarking loomed close, I began to get apprehensive of the immigration authorities. Would they tie me up in knots for the second time? What sort of devilish questions were waiting for me? If only I could get a preview so that this time I might know the right answers. At the sight of the khaki-clad uniforms trooping through the lounge, a cold sort of fury began to work within that made me think aloud.

"I detest officials," I snapped. "All this red tape and nonsense. I wonder just what they will propose doing with me this time?"

Martin with his quiet unruffled calm tried to laugh me out of it. There wasn't a thing to worry about, he assured me. I was entering the country on a permanent visa, everything was in apple-pie order. He accused me of indulging in a masochistic orgy, by thinking up troubles that simply did not exist. Perhaps he was right, but then I had been brim full of confidence once before in New York, my papers had been in equal order there, but even so it had not saved me from a maddening experience.

"You have never landed in New York, or been threatened with Ellis Island," I got back at him.

"Ellis Island!" he twitted. "What an optimist you are! Think of the railway fares we should save. A trip across the continent at the government's expense—no such luck, I'm afraid."

"In which case they may decide to drown me right off the ship," I retorted, refusing to see the funny side.

"A whole lot cheaper if they feel that way, and cool too, on a day like this," he said, casting a look at the blazing sun.

Once again I fell into line with the aliens for the grading process which was now in full swing, and again I fumed inwardly at the foreign implication in an English-speaking country—so much for the English ego which refuses to be downed. We in turn may speak glibly of foreigners to our heart's content, but we are never aliens, or at least we like to think of ourselves in that light. If anything should have knocked such nonsense out of my head for good and all, my landing in New York should have been the absolute cure, yet here it was, rearing up again chauvinistic and as proud and defiant as ever.

I scanned the faces of all about me who went in to meet the inquisitors and watched them more closely on the way out, and if seeing was believing, then there did not appear to be any evidence for alarm, in fact they were all emerging looking entirely complacent, and casually stuffing away passports and papers into pockets and handbags.

It needed more than this, however, to convince me, and when I took my place before the dreaded table I felt as wary as a fox. A little rod of steel seemed to have grown up in my spine, and so rigid was it that it controlled all my muscles, and held my mouth in a vice, but to my utter consternation, I found myself confronting an avuncular looking gent who bade me be seated in the friendliest of fashion. So gracious was he that his voice positively swept me into the chair, and the rod within snapped so suddenly that it must have left me looking very limp and foolish

indeed. I felt exactly like an aggressive foe rigged up in armor, with sword and shield ready for attack, being completely balked by the love of the enemy. If he had produced a steaming hot cup of coffee or a slab of ice cream and set it down before me, I should not have been the least surprised, for closeted in the anteroom, listening to his quiet friendly voice, I felt like an honored guest being welcomed by a charming host.

He briefly scanned my papers, chatting between whiles of the journey, and lastly, checked me off for the passport photograph.

"Not much of a likeness," he smiled. "But then I reckon these things just aren't made to flatter folks. Anyone can see it's you and that's about all. This place is a whole lot different from England, I guess," he went on, "my folks came from those parts, a bit further north though—Scotland," he announced with a proud grin that was like a token of kin.

"Are you planning to become a citizen of the U.S.A.?" he asked me.

I told him that so far I had not given the matter my serious consideration.

"Well, they're both mighty fine countries, I guess, but you'll be saving yourself a bit in head tax if you plan to go on doing this amount of travel," he said, handing me back my much visaed passport. His affability and human method of procedure had demolished the last of my defenses. I was feeling as smooth and sweet as treacle. Impulsively my hand shot out and grabbed his in farewell. He looked somewhat startled at my sudden gesture, but nevertheless he played up warmly, like the good fellow he was. Whether or not he had marked me down as just another erratic alien, headed for Hollywood, I don't know, but, in that handshake, I had laid a

ghost for good and aye, and proved to myself at least, that immigration men can be thoroughly decent beings under their uniforms, and not fiends of hell put there to heap brimstone on unsuspecting peace-abiding visitors.

It was early September, and Los Angeles was scorching under an unrelenting sun. The atmosphere quivered and shook with heat, and the pavements were like hot plates slid out of a furnace. Growing out of Los Angeles is Hollywood, which like an unwieldy adolescent, sprawls over hills and valley, and painted mostly in yellow, has a look of light, flaky pastry, with just the same degree of permanence. It has been created for a party and embellished by an extravagant chef, looks over-rich and highly indigestible.

Walking along the famous Hollywood Boulevard, dodging the blazing sun from side to side, I found myself thinking of it in ruins, and how suffocating and blinding the dust of the yellow plaster would be, should this scene collapse. What would the next one be like, I kept asking myself, for somehow I could not get into my head that the present structure had any permanent meaning. The gim-crack and gaudy effect belied the idea. So, too, do the people roaming the streets, for while the shops display garments of super-elegance, floating creations such as film stars are wont to trail across the celluloid, the female pedestrians slop along in slacks and shorts, hatless and bare-legged, looking exactly like the rabble in a spectacle play.

On the outskirts of Hollywood stands the famous Angelus Temple that is Aimee Semple McPherson's "shrine of religion." Perhaps Hollywood is the one spot on earth where such an affair could have taken root and flourished, catering as it does to an unstable

and maladjusted public. As we approached the Temple, hand-bills began to shower down upon us, distributed by a roving horde of youths. Publicity is one of the major principles of the organization, for as well as the leaflets, the building itself was plastered with a bewildering array of advertisements featuring the fantastic events that are staged there week after week in the name of religion. The Temple itself resembles a large amphitheater, a place built for vaudeville shows, rather than worship, and the platform which accommodates Aimee and her angels is equipped with all the theatrical trappings of the modern stage, even to the lighting and a thick velvet drop curtain. Incredible and monstrous as such a place appears to conforming thinkers, Aimee has nevertheless succeeded in overcoming ridicule and criticism, and has built up a thriving religious cult that is supported by a large flock of devout worshippers. More than that, the Temple of the Four-Square Gospel has become a sight-seeing haunt for tourists, a publicity stunt which provides the organization with a lucrative sort of income. Aimee loves visitors and will stage any spectacle to attract them. She is an accomplished promoter, and stands supreme in the art of charming dollars from the pockets of her generous visitors. The Angelus Temple is credited with some charitable work, but it also permits the arch-priestess to live very well and—it is said—to draw a modest salary of some five thousand dollars a year. Even more strange is the fact that the evangelical gospel is spreading throughout the U.S.A. and today there are numerous Evangelical temples, off-shoots of Aimee's own, dotted in various parts of America, their pastors being graduates of Aimee's own Seminary, all of them ordained by the lady herself.

The air-conditioned train that was to take us to Chicago en route to Bloomington was a blessed respite after a blazing trail of sightseeing. We sank into easy chairs and relaxed in the cool, circulating air, thankful at last to be on the final stage of the long journey. The American trains are super-inventions of luxury travel. Privately owned companies have created keen competition, and the result is that new records in speed and comfort are continually being established and broken. The rail tracks are wide and noise has been reduced to a minimum, so that the train seems to glide along smoothly and silently, knitting speed and comfort to a nicety. As to creature needs, every last detail is accounted for—from a forgotten toothbrush to a manicure and hair-do. All wants can be accommodated on board. The meals, too, are something to wonder at, for the menus present such a choice of fresh, delicious food that it seems the train must be trailing fisheries, poultry yards, and orchards along with it. While the cooking and service are in the same meticulous style as any to be found in a first-class hotel.

The private compartments are ingenious examples of the conjurer's art, for packed into a tiny space is every conceivable human need and everything is made to close up and fold away in a most mysterious manner. By day, you have a secluded drawing room, equipped with chairs, tables, and lounge, which by night is transformed into a bedroom with every convenience requisite for human use, even to a tiny shoe cupboard with a double door, one opening into the corridor that permits the porter to collect, clean, and return your shoes without disturbance. Hot, cold, and iced water are all there, as well as retiring space. All this, beside two comfortable, well-sprung beds.

At either end of the train are club cars. Large lounges with chairs of all varieties are made to fit all shapes of humanity. The latest magazines and journals fill the tables, while a radio helps while away the hours.

The scenery en route is not picturesque in a rural sense, but there is grandeur and something compelling in the rigid isolation of the territory that is known as Death Valley. A grim, towering range of mountains, composed of rock formation, with not a blade of grass, nor a sign of green anywhere visible. A jagged, untenable sphere that stands forever unchallenged, holding mankind at bay. The same "as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever will be, world without end." One or more aeroplanes have crashed in this vicinity, and to see the country is to realize the hopeless, and terrible fate of such disasters. For in this towering, knife-edged zone, men would be less than ants crawling over rocks without hope of life or succor. A godless land, yet wielding a power that humankind dare not defy.

Gradually the territory evens out to the vast uncharted desert, covering tracks as endless as the sky above it; a powerful, tight-fisted scene that yields naught to man or beast. Yet, the elements woo the land with the ardor of their kind, heaping caresses and kindness as a lover does upon an unresponsive mate. By day, the sun beats fiercely down in a shimmering haze, and at night it lowers a gold and purple canopy that casts an iridescent glow upon the vast, intransigent wastes. In season, the rains slake the insatiable soil, watering it with crystal-clear draught, but its countenance remains unchanged. Like a vampire it feasts, drinks and sleeps, succoring naught but its own inviolate solitude; an inhospitable region, it is one with the cosmos and hallowed only by the elements.

Hour after hour, the scene remains unchanged. Only sand and saltbush as far as the eye can travel. Ever so often, you pass the tiny railway settlements that comprise a few lonely huts, and the people that stare at the passing train are like sandflies buzzing in the heat, desolate figures, groping in a wilderness with nothing to cheer their days but the whistle of the train. Cut off from human habitation, these seldom mentioned heroes and heroines have pledged the best of their existence to a train track, biding in loneliness and desolation, living only to see that safety is maintained on the line. I fell to honoring these lonesome folk who, to the passers-by, were but shadows on the rock and part of the landscape. What did they do with their evenings, I wondered? They were infinitely worse off than the birds, who, at least, had green branches to rock in when day was done, and wings to take off with when the spirit moved. What did they look like close to? Were they yellow and dumb, as introverted as the country surrounding, or had they, by the courage of their natures, preserved a knowledge of speech? But, whatever they were, I waved them honor as the train swept past.

We sped through Utah, a gaunt, desolate looking state guarded by a range of solemn, stone-faced hills, and watered by the great Salt Lake, a country as unprepossessing as that preceding it. The train skirted the lake, and at one point actually picked up its skirts and paddled through the water, taking it as casually in its stride as it had the desert wastes. The great stretch of water sleeps still as death, and looks like a forsaken, nerveless ocean, a dismembered part of the sea that by some ill means has become imprisoned in the desert.

On the fringe of the lake stands Salt Lake City, the capital of Utah and the center of Mormon activity. The town rose up as a welcome sign of life, after the

long monotonous span, and as the train stopped for more than an hour, it gave us time to go up to the town and visit the noted Mormon Church.

The main church is an impressive and much turreted building, dignified and somewhat Eastern in contour. Rather to our disappointment, we were not permitted to enter, since the building is regarded as a holy of holies, where only the most chaste and those who faithfully observe every law and concept may set foot. A hush was over the place and the few people who were about were creeping over the thick grass domain on tiptoe. Even the birds seemed to respect the silence. The very air was still as though it were sanctified by some compelling force. In the same grounds are several other churches, sons of the same stern father, where the frailer of the flock gather for worship. They are more austere and simpler in effect than the main building, as befits the novitiates of an ascetic order.

The Mormons are but one more unusual sect that has originated and flourished on this amazing continent. They were founded originally by one Joseph Smith, in 1830, in New York. The founder claimed to have received a vision of a new gospel. This, so the Mormons declare, was revealed to him by mystic writings on gold plates, which the visionary was able to translate by ancient stones of divination, the Urim and Thurim, a power which was also miraculously granted to him. When the translation, which is now known as the Book of Mormon, was complete, the plates are supposed to have been whisked up by an angel and returned to the mystic spheres from whence they came. The cult gained many converts, but since polygamy was one of its first precepts, it got into very bad odor with its neighbors, so much so that New York would have none of it, and a drive then commenced from State to State until its follow-

ers finally found sanctuary in the barren hills of Utah.

Here under the able leadership of Brigham Young, a disciple of Joseph Smith, they flourished by leaps and bounds. By sheer industry, they have transformed a wilderness into a thriving city, and before many years had elapsed a new state was developing under their guidance. Polygamy, however, proved a barrier to progress. America simply would not legally countenance it, and it was not until Congress had passed a law forbidding the practice, and the Mormons had agreed to abide by the decision, that Utah was declared a State.

Today the Mormons or Latter-Day Saints, as they prefer to be called, are an immensely wealthy body of people. They virtually own Salt Lake City, and the Mormon Church not only dominates the politics of the State, but its influence also extends into the neighboring states of Idaho and Wyoming.

The Mormon creed, with polygamy deleted, is based on rigid principles of behavior. A rare form of asceticism exists among the members. Smoking and stimulants are strictly forbidden, and anything as mild as tea or coffee is included in the ban.

A female passenger from the train, who had attached herself to us during the walk to the Church, was full of admiration for the Sect.

"I've studied it quite a lot," she told us, "and it's a sight better than most other religions I know of. Folks would be a whole lot improved for a bit of Mormonism. Just look how they've grown," she said, turning and sweeping her arm toward the city.

"And think what they might have been without Congress' intervention," remarked Martin drily. "With polygamy enforced, we could have Mormons for breakfast by this time."

"Oh, that!" flung the lady. "Exaggerated of course. They never were as bad as Congress would have you believe. What's wrong with polygamy, anyway? They had to keep their wives, didn't they? No matter how many, and keep them properly, what's more. And that's more than can be said of many men, with only one wife on their hands." She glared malevolently at me as she spoke, as though she were searching for holes in my dress. I wished Martin would hand me a nickel just to prove that, although not a Mormon, he did keep me properly.

Standing in the church precincts is a magnificently dome-shaped building that is used exclusively for organ recitals. It has been constructed entirely from the stones of the neighboring hills and the acoustics are credited with being the best in the world. The Mormons have their own broadcasting station, and their organ recitals rank high in the American world of music.

From Utah, we passed into Nebraska, where the prairies unfold the same story mile upon mile. Inanimate country, harsh and burnt to a cinder by the prolonged summer heat, nevertheless there was nutriment in the brown stubble, for gradually cattle began to invade the scene. Quiet, grazing herds with bent heads and lean shanks, they roamed the vast, unfenced places, returning life to the landscape.

Small town after small town flashed past, and sometimes when the train slowed down to roar its way through a Main Street, you got a close-up view of the tiny townships; a handful of shops, enlivened by a colored petrol pump; a few small timber houses, and several straggling trees that were dark smudges against the outlying plains beyond. I wondered time and again what on earth could have inspired such places. On what and how did they exist? What held

them together? They looked so dull and remote, without pattern or purpose, sitting on the edge of the train track, rather as though they were mislaid freight that was waiting to be picked up and carried off to a more urban setting. America has thousands and thousands of such towns. They are small without being young. Neither are they growing entities. Many of them have a strange, bearded look of middle age, like a creature who, cut off in its youth, had suddenly become hirsute. They live in the country yet are unrelated to the landscape. The hills and prairies seem to ride away from them and hold aloof.

Unlike the English villages, which are marked by cozy shops, thatched cottages, and green farm yards, these towns are gauche commercial outposts, and the gayest spots in them are contributed by the petrol pumps that supply a gaudy dash of color.

As we drew closer to the great mid-west, and small towns commenced to rub elbows, I fell to wondering what our destination would be like. Had we by any chance passed its twin along the way? Was it a hirsute spot like those we had left behind? I began to sort them out mentally, shuddering secretly at those which looked impossible and turning a sharp, critical eye on any that showed signs of being endurable. Martin refused to be drawn. He could see nothing wrong with small towns. In fact, he liked them.

"But look at that one," I cried, as the train fled past and all but shook down the row of wooden dwellings that looked as though they had just dropped down to bide a while on their journey.

"Well, what's wrong with it?" he returned. "Probably a very comfortable place to live in, if you only knew it. No social fuss and few people to worry you. Plenty of fresh air, too. Nice, healthy life, I'll bet, and besides—"

"Besides what?" I echoed suspiciously.

"Besides, Bloomington has a University," he cooed, passing me a sly look. And with that, I had to be content.

At Chicago we changed trains, and here we embarked on a sliding scale of comfort. The train that we had just left was luxury to the last letter. And the one that we now entered seemed like a freight train in comparison. The five hours sitting bolt upright, maintaining a steady jig with the panting engines seemed longer by far than the seventy-two hours spent crossing the continent.

But infinitely worse was the last lap of the journey on the one daily local to Bloomington. Air-conditioning does not extend to the local trains, and we not only jogged, but we suffocated at the same time. To increase our discomfort, the perspiring porter chose to seat himself directly opposite us, throw off his hat and unbutton his coat, so that I could count the rivulets of sweat pouring down from forehead, and splashing on to his chest. He was dissolving at such a rate that I never thought he would last the distance. My only wish was that he would hurry up and disappear so that I could fling his empty uniform out of the window and be rid of the sight of him as well as make room for our hand baggage that seemed to be swelling and increasing in the overwhelming heat. We were compelled to keep the windows open to enable us to breathe, and the dust sweeping in was covering us in streaky gray. We looked like zebras traveling in a cattle truck. The one consolation was the view of the country, for we were traveling through soft, rolling hills and curving around green forests that at least looked cool. I began to dream of Bloomington as a green sanctuary at which we were soon to alight.

"Awful hot," muttered the porter as the whistle woke him from his stupor. "It's sure been bad in these parts these last two days."

"But Bloomington will be cool," I said trying to sound as though I knew. "Plenty of hills and trees about."

"Bloomington, nothing," he grunted contemptuously. "Hot as hell, that place is, and no fooling. It lies in a hollow and all those doggone hills do is to shovel down the heat."

"Did you know that Bloomington was in a hollow?" I asked Martin, when the porter had staggered out of the seat. My disappointment and discomfort at that moment were such that I believed that he had purposely run it down hill just to aggravate me.

"Well, now that you mention it, I suppose it is. Nicely sheltered though in winter," he said in a voice of exasperating calm.

"That, at least, will be something worth waiting for," I replied. "And zebras do best in sheltered spots, I'm told," but my acidness was lost, for the train with a terrific lurch had flung itself upon Bloomington, and Martin was already on the sizzling platform calmly checking off bags and boxes.

PART THREE

SMALL TOWN

CHAPTER XIII

BLOOMINGTON

A neat picture of Oxford reduced to traveling size must have been carefully stored away in my unconscious mind and the moment that we set foot in Bloomington it came floating up to the surface. Quickly a film reel began to unwind before my inner vision, showing a gray, softly lighted place and well-remembered haunts. Feverishly I scanned the horizon to find some resemblance to my cherished conceptions of what a university town should look like. Where were the gray, Gothic spires, I asked myself, the cloistered dignity befitting scholarly surroundings, the green and gray places hallowed by learning and indicative of the arts and sciences? Surely there must be a reflection somewhere, however remote, of the picture I had in mind, but in the first glimpse of the town that was to be our home there was not even a vestige of anything that suggested the precincts of a University, much less a cultural atmosphere.

Piling as much of ourselves as we could into a taxi, our first objective was to find a place to stay. It transpired at this juncture that Martin had arranged with the only townsperson that he knew to try and procure for us suitable living quarters, and to this man we now made off with all possible haste.

The car drew up in the center of the town and I was left to wait in the blistering heat while Martin went in to do the interviewing. And as I looked out upon the town square my spirit became a leaden weight, abject, and pretty close to despair. "Bloomington—Doomington" rhymed a mocking voice within, harping mostly on the latter, for certainly it seemed an apt name for the benighted outlook.

The business part of town consists of a small square with a courthouse seated in the center, a large stone structure which is in every respect a replica of an outsize tombstone. Around the square are a series of small shops. The courthouse itself, which is the main feature of the town, is as black as the ace of spades, begrimed and mildewed by something that is neither age nor wisdom. A good deal of the blackened aspect is the residue of soot from the soft coal that is used in the district, together with the smoke collected from the continual procession of freight trains, while the feathered flock have used it as a high place of functional convenience, and their droppings make up the mildewed effect.

On this late Friday afternoon the town was full of people and the courthouse steps were littered with men of all ages. They sat huddled and slovenly, minus coats and unshaven, looking spineless and aimless except for their continual spitting which was accomplished with ear splitting regularity. The scene was as benighted and moronic as a chamber of horrors.

"Is this the town?" I asked the taxi driver weakly, "I mean, all of it?"

"Yes, ma'am, it sure is. That is to say, there are a few more shops further out round the campus, but this is the town proper."

"And these people, do they live here? Is it always like this?"

"Well, no, ma'am. It ain't exactly. These are farm folk mostly. They live way out, round abouts, and they come in regular Friday and Saturdays—market days."

Since then, we have learned to avoid the square on week-ends, for at that time, the peasants settle upon it like a swarm of locusts, chirping and standing through the whole long day. Packed eight and ten deep along the pathway, they idle in conclave and spit voraciously. To try and push your way through the mob is like trying to break through a brick wall. They're equally solid and impenetrable. Nor are they any special bounty to the shops that they obliterate, the main object of their visit being to meet the rest of their clan, gossip and stand. They will lounge against the shop windows, block up the entrances, deface the pavement with expectorations, seldom moving or shifting until the day is over, while the shops for the most part are deserted by their regular shoppers. One outfitting establishment has been compelled to remove the seats along the counter simply because the week-enders hailed it as a place to sit and turn the shop into a weekly meeting-booth. And here, week after week, they would occupy the seats and refuse to move out until the shop was closed.

They are a distressing element of society, distressing because they appear to have slipped beyond the lowest rung of human levels. Unbelievably poor, they are victims of a poor farming district. Year in and year out, they scratch and scrape at a soil that returns them stone for bread, and the result is a people of impoverished vitality. I suffered an uncomfortable stab when one of the professors pointed them out to me as being the original settlers of

British stock. Certainly there is no vestige of their inheritance to be traced in the coarse blank faces these days. Nevertheless, there is something suggestive of a Teutonic strain, like stems grown thick and void in alien soil. They came, it was told me, from Britain and settled first in Virginia. Then when the land gave out at that point, they moved on to Kentucky, marrying and inter-breeding on the way until finally they have come to settle on the hard and unresponsive soil that surrounds Bloomington. In the slow grim process of their evolution, vitality and human attributes appear to have been drained as dry as the land they till. And today, they are casually referred to by their fellows as the morons.

"Didn't you know," was one of the first things that greeted me, "Bloomington adjoins Brown county, and that is a moronic center? We are quite close now to the famous Kalakack family. Sociological textbooks are full of their exploits."

I have not seen the Kalakack family, but I have seen many people in the town square that would appear to occupy a very lowly niche in the human strata, bulky masses of gross flesh as inert and expressionless as withered turnips tossed out of a barren ground.

At first sight, they were a sickening and depressing spectacle, opposite to everything I had fondly expected to find and a strange anamoly to be in the precincts of a cultural center. It was something like pulling pitch out of a party surprise packet. The joke was on me, and after a journey of more than twelve thousand miles, I was in no mood for mockery. My first impulse was to turn and fly to a more civilized scene. Nor was the situation improved any when Martin emerged from the shop to say that accommodations of any kind were at a premium.

Something might turn up, of course, but in the meantime we must put up at the local hotel and hope for the best.

The hotel stands on a corner of the square overlooking the railway tracks on one side, and the edifying square on the other, and it required stern discipline on my part to draw my unwilling limbs through the doors and up the stairs to the reception hall. My spirits began to soar somewhat when the manager told us that he had no accomodation, until I suddenly realized that this was the only place where we could stay. A little determined pressure on Martin's part, however, finally succeeded in squeezing a cupboard on the top floor out of him.

"Two nights is the most I can let you have it, though," he said grudgingly, taking a key off the keyboard and handing it over to the porter who stood by like a grim jailer. "This is rush week, see. The place is booked out from floor to ceiling, and you'll just have to be out by Sunday latest."

Resentment at something which I did not understand welled up within.

"Rush week!" I echoed. "And what might that be?"

The look that he turned on me was a mixture of scorn and contempt. Such ignorance in a University town was beyond his ken.

"Rush week is for students. This hotel is reserved by girls, and they'll all be here Sunday, see?"

With that, he turned his face to the keyboard again and left me to read the rest of the riddle from his broad, white-shirted back.

Martin afterwards explained the mystery in part, and tried painstakingly to instill something of its importance into my incredulous mind.

"It's no use your looking snorty," he grinned. "Rushing is a mighty important ritual to those whom

it concerns. It may be a bit inconvenient for us, just at the moment, but to the hopeful students, it's a matter of life and death."

"Life and death!" I gasped. "How and why, for goodness' sake?"

"Because rushing, my dear, means social grading, no more, no less. On Sunday this place will be packed with tremulous young things with fluttering hearts and quaking knees, everyone of them tense and unsure of how they will rank in the eyes of the all-powerful and stern-hearted actives of a sorority."

"Sort of intellectual snobbery and diploma grading, I suppose," I answered, feeling that I'd got the gist of it.

"Oh, no, nothing of the sort. You've got it all wrong. It's charm and '*pursenality*' that counts. A sorority wants pep and jazz, not bluestockings. Next week all the newcomers will be fêted as a try-out, and while they are strutting their stuff, tip-toeing and exuding charm, the sorority actives will carefully measure them up and select what they think are the best ornaments available. Only a certain number can hope to gain admittance to the exalted portals so that everyone does his damndest at this time to be among the privileged."

"And what happens to the others?" I asked.

"Ah, now, that's where tragedy enters in. They are the social outcasts for the time being, sort of ignominious fadeouts. Some of them manage to survive. Of course, usually they get themselves an independent room and bury their sorrows in study. But there are some who never recover. These take the next train home, their highest hopes vanquished, and feeling that their whole social structure has been ruined for all time."

"But isn't this a University town? Don't they come here principally to study?" I asked aghast.

"Not principally. Certainly not the fair sex. Some do, of course, but for the majority, nabbing a husband in their prime is the first objective. Sensible too, when you come to think of it. After all, the nicest boys are all in college."

My preconceived ideas were dancing a jig. Everything was sadly awry, and nothing seemed to fit into form. And in answer to my perplexed expression, he added:

"But you just wait until Sunday. You'll get a better idea of things then."

When Sunday dawned, it certainly gave me an entirely unexpected angle of feminine beginnings in an American University. By midday the hotel was thronged. Girls were everywhere. They trooped in by every entrance, fluttering through doors and windows and settling like a flock of migrating birds, ornate in their summer plumage. Curls and fur-belows, streamers and veils, long lengths of hose, high-stepping shoes, bows and bracelets, and eager, painted faces that made glowing advertisements for the cosmetic distributors. The hotel lounge had become an aviary of shrill chattering birds. They made an astounding spectacle and looked the antithesis of scholarly ambition. Rather they appeared like an overflow crowd from Hollywood besieging a vaudeville office for a musical tryout.

We managed to get out our luggage, edging and pushing our way through the mob, and I, for one, was glad to leave them in complete possession of the hotel. They were more than welcome to the cupboard that we had vacated, for the two nights that we had spent in it had come pretty close to refined torture. Situated immediately under the roof, the

heat turned it into a merry hell. By night, the heat rose up from the floor and closed down from the ceiling while we swam in the moist cleft between. To add to the general discomfort trains roared past at regular short intervals, creating such a furore that it seemed they must be going to run straight through the room. So real was the illusion that we spent the nights diving out of bed to watch them climb the hotel walls and ride over us. Between trains, we took cold baths. Soot and steam streamed through the open window so that all night we breathed the brown burnt smell of the furnace, and with the window closed we stifled. Two nights of cold baths and watching trains go by had at last threatened to disrupt Martin's habitual calm, since without sleep he is completely shattered. Nothing else has the power to produce a show of irritability in him, so that when the manager, who was then puffed up with so much feminine adornment, murmured his regrets for our forced departure, and hope that we had found the beds comfortable, Martin replied tersely that he did not know.

"We were never in them," he said, slamming down the check.

"Not in them!" quavered the astonished manager.

"We used the bath instead. Cold, too," he added.

"We prefer our blood congealed."

"And the trains run so smoothly through your top floor rooms. We've enjoyed watching them so much," I managed to get in before a party of new arrivals swooped down and whisked him off.

The campus is less than half a mile from the town square, yet it stands remote and distinct as a far-flung empire. A forest seemingly has been preserved, and in among the trees new buildings have grown up with shining white faces. It is all very

new and self-contained and the effect is a perfect co-ordination of man and nature.

Away from the town square, Bloomington is lavishly treed and in those blistering hot days of early September, the foliage still rippling green, the campus was a heavenly dispensation counteracting, to a large extent, the strange and unpleasant first impressions of arrival. The University was still enjoying its last drowsy sleep of summer vacation. Life stirred only faintly in the precincts. The student body had not yet returned in full force, and the grounds were more or less deserted. They were a cool and blessed retreat to wander in, under maples and walnuts, oaks and birches, and to watch the squirrels that were tame as kittens, their tails hooped into question marks as they collected their winter store and went scampering their gains away into the trees. Some of them were timid creatures that fled at the first sound of approach, but for the most part, they were too engrossed with their labors to be bothered with mere humans. Sitting up, they watched you slyly in passing and went calmly on munching a choice nut.

In those early days, I consoled myself entirely with the presence of the trees. They compensated for a certain loneliness and a nostalgia, a queer, cut-off sensation that eats the city dweller in a small town. Without the trees, I should have been desolated. As it was, the place was a blaze of green. The residential area surrounding the campus was lined with foliage so that you walked under long, leafy avenues blissfully unaware of the houses nestling between. In some places, weeping willows had let down their thick green tresses and trailed them over the lawns. At evening, the air was perfumed with a pungent acridness, and in the early mornings, the trees shook

down cool draughts that were like icy flakes falling in the pale gold day's beginning. People seemed of little consequence just then. I told myself that I could quite easily live without neighbors.

"Better the things you come to know by nature than finding out strangers," I told Martin glibly one day, in a great wealth of enthusiasm, a mood that was possibly sublimation of a gnawing loneliness.

"But what about the winter?" he said sagely. "Soon, you know, there won't be a leaf remaining. Only blackened twigs. People will have their uses then, if it's only to decorate the fireplace."

But talk of fires was unendurable, just as winter seemed a remote season, for in Indiana, the summer lingered on far into October, and day after day, the sun beat down like a furnace whilst the trees maintained their splendor. The transition of summer into autumn was such a gradual process and one so fraught with beauty that the end never seemed possible. Everywhere was an extending chain of color, changing and accruing with each passing week. Green turned to gold until poplars and birch were waving heights of translucent amber. Maples and oak were stained red and purple. A livid glow was over the landscape so that at evening a pink haze of fire mounted from the earth and lit the heavens. The dying embers held and held until winter's frost and gale had finally vanquished the last leaf. Tranquility, fulfillment and death so well-ordered and sustained that the end seemed a kindly and natural process.

CHAPTER XIV

SETTLING IN BLOOMINGTON

Fortune had smiled on us early in arrival, for in a small town where living accommodation was at a premium and faced with what seemed to be a desperate situation, there had suddenly appeared from nowhere a little house that was perfect for our needs. It is built on a small rise at the end of a residential road one mile from the town and looks out on a large expanse of prairie land that in autumn was a blaze of goldenrod, tall, waving weed of the wattle variety with a subtle, warm perfume.

We furnished it with all possible haste and settled into housekeeping in the small American town with a right good will. Most of our necessities we were able to purchase locally. The shops turned out to be surprisingly well stocked and a new kind of respect began to dawn in me for the variety of commodities that is available in a small American town. There were some things, however, that were not to be had and a few of my requirements caused the shop clerks to rear up indignantly and remind me that Bloomington was only a small town. It is a sort of defense cry that I've since come to know by heart. Whenever you ask for something a trifle out of the ordinary or that does not happen to be in stock, the rejoinder is always the same. There is an obvious muscular face stiffening and a moment of pained silence followed by a withering reminder that "Bloomington is only a small town."

So far, it has never failed to have a chastening ef-

fect upon me, resulting in my downcast exit, and invariably clutching the wrong article under my arm.

One of the first things that we did was to establish our credit in the local shops, a procedure that was always a prolonged and irritating cross-questioning. A request for a monthly account would immediately produce the shop proprietor ambling from out of a back office, suspiciously fixing spectacles, who after a lengthy, appraising look that went so far as to take in the quality of the clothes on our backs, subjected us to an intensive questioning. At last, however, we did succeed in satisfying most of them as to our honest intentions, all but one hardware dealer who refused to be convinced.

On my first visit I had hastily grabbed up eight dollars' worth of kitchen utensils and the next day went back for more. The salesman bore with me for a while, jotting down the order. Then, suddenly putting aside the book, he looked at me over the top of his glasses and mournfully shook his head.

"It's an awful lot of money you're spending. I just don't know if I should rightly be selling you so much. You spent a whole lot of money here yesterday."

"Not an awful lot," I said apologetically. "Only eight dollars."

"Ah know it," he returned in the same doleful voice, "but now you've gone a whole lot higher. This adds up to twelve dollars against you this morning, and makes twenty dollars in all. It is a mighty lot for a stranger." His voice and small suspicious eyes nettled me.

"But I intend to pay you," I expostulated. "We satisfied you as to our integrity yesterday before opening the account. What more do you need?"

"Well, ah don't know, but ah guess ah'll have to tell the boss before ah book down any more stuff."

With that, he turned on his heel and went into a huddle with the proprietor who was watching at the far end of the counter. They added up and subtracted, meanwhile casting covert glances in my direction.

I cursed my lack of foresight in having rushed from the throes of furnishing wearing only a modest house dress. At any rate, I should have known better than to have jammed on my old sports hat, for by now, I knew enough of the American temperament to know that face value counts for everything, and particularly in a woman. Dress poorly, and you will be treated with scant respect. Whereas, sables and a touch of orchids will produce a deference that comes close to groveling. I had learned that much in New York and Chicago, and the same evidently was good for Bloomington. In America, a woman ranks as the barometer of her husband's financial position. An impressive and expensive looking wife does a lot for his credit, whilst the more abstract qualities that are the measure of culture and breeding count for precious little. No man will come out of his office, even in the worst weather, to interview tweeds and a raincoat, while furs and diamonds will send him toppling over to get to you, and if I had expected honesty to outshine my old hat and dress in the hardware shop, I was sadly mistaken. On the contrary, I had queered my pitch. The salesman's manner stated that plainly enough.

"Well, he says it's alright, so ah guess it is." He perked his thumb in the direction of the proprietor to indicate who "he" was. In America, and Bloomington in particular, he and she are common terms for identification. No one is ever afforded the courtesy of a title in matters of address. A thumb stuck in your direction and "he says" or "she says" is the most you can hope for. Whenever the thumb and

“she” refers to me, I always find myself chanting “she’s the cat’s grandmother.” But so far, my remark has passed unchallenged, and I am still “she” to all and sundry.

“I am not concerned whether he considers it all right or not,” I said boiling over with righteous indignation. My sufferance by now was at an end, and with what was intended to be a superb flourish of disapproval, I haughtily paid the eight dollars debited against me, and promptly cancelled the present order. “Really, you have the most extraordinary business methods that I have ever encountered,” I said, trying to frost my words to freezing point.

Whilst I waited for my receipt I looked round to see if my grand manner of defiance was being properly appreciated, and whether the prompt settlement had forced home to them an error of judgment. But to my consternation, I saw a look of relief leap into the eyes of the mistrusting salesman, my payment being regarded as the symbol of guilt, and his was the glory for having pulled me up in time. I felt like a vanquished outlaw, as he actually bowed me out of the shop, suddenly all smiles to be rid of me.

Most of the shop keepers, however, were extremely helpful and accommodating during the early days of the house furnishing. They ran to and fro, bringing things out piece by piece and taking an active interest in the progress of the rooms.

The outstanding example of helpful salesmanship came from the man who sold us the gas stove. The head salesman by all appearance, but the moment the stove was decided upon, he rode straight out with it and hovered by until it was fixed and in working order. Whilst he acted as overseer to the men who were joining and blowing out gas pipes, he roamed around the empty house praising and making sug-

gestions and displaying a perfect lust for domesticity. He evidently had an equal interest in electrical consumption, for he went from room to room testing light switches and mending fuses with all the expertness of a handy man. Twice he went back to town and brought out new electric globes, inquiring each time if there was any shopping he could bring back with him. He spent the entire afternoon putting us into working order, and when at last everything seemed to be completed and I had made him a cup of tea on the new stove just to show him how it worked, he waxed confidential.

"Well, I guess you're sittin' real pretty here," he sighed over the kitchen table. "Nothing like a house once you get it fixed up nicely. I had one myself once."

"In Bloomington?" I inquired politely.

"No, in Chicago. I was married down there for five years. But I guess it didn't work out so well. I had a pretty good job there too, and everything was swell for a while, but you know how these things are. And afterwards, I came down here to Bloomington. Suits me all right in a way. Rates pretty good for a small town. But I like a home. It's kinda cozier. A wife means a lot, too, I guess."

A little confounded by his sudden confidences, I murmured something that was meant to sound encouraging. He might perhaps marry again and have a home.

"Well, that's as it may be. If I could strike the right woman, it's likely enough I'd try again, but those five years should sure have been a lesson to any man." The tea, fortunately, seemed to smooth the edge off some of his grievances, for soon he was beaming his approval at the teapot.

"You sure know how to make good tea. I had some Scotch friends once down in Chicago, and whenever I'd drop in on them away'd go the kettle and sure thing there'd be tea. My, but it's a knock-out, what you folks from the other side can do with a teapot. It tastes kind of different to the stuff we make."

On the subject of tea, the ground evened out again and for the rest of the time that he remained, I kept his hands full of good strong brew so that by the time he departed we were both grateful. I, for gas and electrical utilities, all in perfect working order, and he for a place to work off his domestic yearnings.

"Well, I sure hope you're going to like Bloomington," he said in parting. "It's not a bad town, once you get settled in. It's slow going after a city. The people are kinda mixed here, too. Some of them not so easy, but then again there's some—" he said with a knowing wink that was designed to leave me curious.

The man from the furniture store was another who injected a personal touch into our new home. A sparse, little man who reminded me of a bobby-pin, he ran 'round the rooms with each piece of furniture that he brought out, getting the effect that pleased him the most. Several times, we came close to quarreling over the arrangement of various pieces, so determined was he to put things where he liked them most, impervious to my remarks that it was I who had to live with them.

"You're plain making a mistake if you put that table there," he said when I proposed standing it by the door. "I planned to have it over here by the window. It's got no right to be on that side of the room."

"But I like it over by the door," I expostulated, trying to wrench it from his grasp.

"Well, have it there, if you must, but you're making a mistake. Seems a real pity to me to spoil a good effect. The window's the place for it, and no other." With which he grabbed it back again and planted it where he considered it ought to be. For some reason, the table has stayed by the window. Many times I have longed to move it, but I always have a feeling that he will bob up again and shift it back.

Despite his aggravating manner, he was, however, actuated by the kindest motives, and his willingness to serve knew no bounds. He would arrive at any hour, no matter how late, to finish a job that needed his attention. There was one night when he telephoned at nine P.M. to say that he would be out later to hang some pictures.

"I'm just going to get a bite of lunch, then I'll be straight over."

"Lunch!" I gasped. "Surely not at this hour. It's nine o'clock."

"Yep, I know it, but we've been real busy at the store. Usually I go to lunch at seven o'clock. But tonight I couldn't make it. But I'll be seeing you." And see us he did. He arrived close to ten o'clock to hang the pictures and worked solidly on until past midnight.

Another rare character was the man who cut the glass top for the dining-room table. From his appearance, I judged him to be a down-and-out. A great, shambling creature, toothless and literally in rags, he arrived grimed with dirt, mumbling that he had come to see about the glass for the table. I let him into the house somewhat doubtfully, amazed that such a person should have been sent. Three

times he took the measurements, and each time the glass was the wrong size.

"Doggone it," he grunted ruefully the last time, "but this darn table has sure got me all tied up. It don't work out at all with my rule. Seemed right enough when I cut it. But there it is. It jest don't fit, and that's all there is to it. Reckon I'll just have to make it over again."

As I watched him staggering away with his fragile burden I began to feel concerned for his succession of errors. He looked such a dejected and pathetically poor figure.

"Think how terrible if he has to pay for all of the glass he ruins," I told Martin. "Why on earth don't they send out a more presentable and more capable person?" I remonstrated. "He has no idea of measurement. It makes me miserable to watch him. And not a tooth in his head."

"He doesn't need teeth to cut glass with," was Martin's irritating rejoinder.

After a good deal of patience on all sides, the glass eventually arrived, cut to size, and at the week-end, the same man appeared for the check, but he had undergone such a transformation that I did not know him. The battered old hat was discarded for a smart felt. The tattered garments were replaced by a clean, white shirt and dark trousers, while his face, clean and shaved, shone like a new coin. And most of all, his smile revealed a double row of glittering teeth. I gazed at him stupidly, quite overcome by the absolute change.

"Oh, the glass," I managed to stammer.

"Yeah, ma'am. It did kinda get me sore, but it's fixed now, I guess," he said handing me the account.

"And to whom do I make out the check?" I asked him, trying hard to reconcile this spruce person with

the toothless poverty-stricken creature of yesterday.

"To me," he replied promptly. "The name's right there on the bill."

"Then you mean that you own the glass factory?" I spluttered in honest surprise.

"Ah sure do, ma'am, and if you'll be wanting more glass, just call me up, and ah'll sure be glad to take care of it for you."

With that, he doffed his smart hat, called out a familiar goodbye, and swaggered out of the house.

CHAPTER XV

GETTING ACQUAINTED

I have been assured many times that Bloomington has more than eighteen thousand inhabitants. I have it from the bank manager, the insurance broker, the local judge, and lastly the postman, who, when I mooted my doubts, threatened to roll them off in alphabetical order.

"And that, I'll have you know, does not include the students," he told me.

But for all that, I am unconvinced. In fact, I should have difficulty in believing that Bloomington could boast of even fifty thorough-going citizens, and those I should say, were permanently out of town. Apart from the farmers in the town square at week ends, and the students about the campus, Bloomington as a city is deserted, a place as dead as ash. From month to month there is seldom a sign of life to be seen in the residential streets, and whenever I wander through them, treading line after line of white paving, I find myself reminded of Oliver Goldsmith's poem, "The Deserted Village."

There are plenty of houses, more than enough to shelter the entire eighteen thousand people who are supposed to exist here. They extend for street after street, most of them neat, and extremely modern, with well-tended, unfenced gardens, clean curtained windows, and sedately lowered blinds. And in winter, when the chimneys are belching smoke, there is everything to suggest regular habitation, but there all signs of life end.

The people themselves are never visible, least of all do they ever walk in the streets. Day after day I have circled the entire community without meeting a living soul. The effect is uncanny, and after a while it begins to weave a deadening, atrophying spell about you. It cannot be described as peaceful, because it is unnatural, and curiously unreal, since people, after all, reflect the atmosphere of the town, and whether they be good, bad or indifferent, they nevertheless compose the spiritual entity, so that without people the best of houses, no matter how ornate, are no better than tombstones marking resting places.

Many times on my long, solitary walks, I try to think of a counterpart for Bloomington in England, but no matter what inland country town springs into mind, whether it be Buxton in the north, or Tonbridge Wells in the south, there is no atom of resemblance. For all the austerity and aloofness with which England and the English are credited throughout America, there is a much more vital effect of living to be found in any English town, compared to one of a similar size in the U. S. A. Perhaps it is because walking is an institutional part of English life, and particularly in a country town. It is customary to walk in England, a function that comes as naturally to the English as eating or drinking. People walk to the shops, to pay visits, to exercise their dogs, and sometimes for the sheer fun of walking. Consequently, the streets have life and movement in them. English legs have been trained for use, not things to coddle, whereas in America, they are treated strictly as ornaments, fragile props that are preserved as supports only. Under no circumstances are they ever abused by walking. Instead they are carefully wrapped up, tucked into motor cars, and

carried wherever they have to go, so that Bloomington, from an urban aspect, is a scene of utter deadliness, and no matter how much I try, I cannot rid myself of the sensation of having entered the graveyard before my natural time.

At first, in my ignorance, and full of curiosity as to what the people of the town looked like, I expected to find some of them in the shops, but here again I was doomed to disappointment, for Bloomington does its shopping by telephone, and seldom, if ever, goes down and forages for its commodities. The only sign of life in the daily scene is supplied by the dogs. Every unfenced garden patch has a dog mounting guard, but these, again, are never exercised, and when they walk, they go alone. The canine world of Bloomington supplies the friendliest aspect by far. Quite often when my dog and I set off for our daily tramp the neighboring dogs cast envious glances after us. In fact, at times, many of them choose to accompany us, and it is no uncommon thing for me to walk with as many as eight and ten dogs at my heels, and return them all home again on the way back. Just to prove their good will, they come calling on us. Among our friends is a bull pug, a British bulldog, a cocker spaniel, and a handsome chow. These call regularly. They scrape at the door, demand entrance, come in and nose around for a bit, and often flop down for an extended visit. Most of them bring bones as visiting cards, that are picked clean and chalky white. They litter them over the grass until at times the garden resembles Resurrection Day, and I find myself murmuring "Alas, poor Yorick." In the dogs, at least, we have found favor, for quite early after our arrival they nosed us out, and offered friendship, which in a way, is compensa-

tion in a town that is notorious for its lack of interest in newcomers.

"Are you getting to know people that you like?" a woman asked me recently, who had come to collect a donation for the Red Cross. She sat on the extreme edge of the chair, screwing at the button of her glove, and so obviously ill at ease that I had a desire to open the window and let her fly out.

"Oh, well," I murmured evasively, trying to be noncommittal.

"I know it's difficult. Bloomington is a bad town in that respect," she shrilled. "We were real miserable when we first came."

"And have you been here long?"

"Not really long for Bloomington. It's ten years now, I guess, but the first eight years here were real lonesome. After that the children made contacts for us at school. Have you any children?" she asked.

"No, only my dog, and he's a little too young for school yet. He brings his friends home, though."

At which she came violently apart from the chair edge, and made such a hurried exit that I had to run after her to close the door. I could feel her thoughts oozing through her back. "Foreign lunatic. No hope for her whatsoever in Bloomington!" seemed to be her judgment.

A professor's wife confided a similar story to me, only that her travail of loneliness dated even longer. For fourteen years they had lived in Bloomington, and were only now commencing to find a few congenial people.

"Not friends, though," she hastened to explain. "People don't seem to make real friends in this town. It's different to all other towns in that respect," she told me. "No one but the native sons of the State, the real Hoosiers, can get very far here."

"A pretty bleak outlook," I grumbled to Martin one evening. "And since we are neither native sons nor even citizens of the country, our chances of friend-finding look pretty slender."

"Don't you believe it," he twitted, and flourished wide the evening newspaper. "Just you listen to this." With which he proceeded to rattle off an obituary notice. Mr. H., the paper stated, had just passed away, and after setting out his record of past activities, it went on to say that even though he was a newcomer to Bloomington and had only lived there for eleven years, he nevertheless had made a wide circle of friends.

"You see," chanted Martin, "it's merely a matter of time. I'm all for it myself," he added, thrusting his head back into the newspaper. "I never did believe in rushing people. The dogs we can always kick out if they become a nuisance, whereas . . ."

The local newspapers provide a bright contribution to the general doleful atmosphere. For the front page of one is a literal mortuary parlor, where night after night, the dead are laid out in rows, complete with shroud, and every detail relating to the deceased's last breath. Quite often as many as ten obituaries decorate the page, drenched in tears, and hung with sackcloth, so that to read through them is to come face to face with the wailing wall. If you wish for world news and latest gossip, you must hunt through the last page, where, likely as not, you will find it wedged between the advertisements. When the death rate falls off, it whets the appetite with possibilities, and lists the latest arrivals into the local hospital. No one, however, is ever mentioned as having recovered, and so far as I can make out, they never emerge except in coffins. Recently when a professor's wife was suddenly rushed into a hospi-

tal, suffering from pneumonia, the newspaper scooped up the news, and retailed it with such an ominous note that I felt quite defiant in sending her a gay bunch of flowers. To observe common decencies, they should at least have been half mourning. That she recovered and emerged hale and hearty was carefully omitted from mention in this journal.

A more diverting column appears in the rival newspaper, which enlivens its front page with a much read paragraph, called "Rounding the Square." This sets out all the spicy town chat, and flatters the worthy ones with a knowing nod of "We know what you're up to." It's not much to bite upon, however, but it is infinitely less clammy than the mortuary parlor. These personal flashes appear thus. "Old-timer in the mail business, seen chatting with a young clerk. . . . Joe Fletcher, undecided whether to enter the jewelry store. . . . Mrs. Beal's dog, having a big time, barking at a big dog on the other side of a glass door. . . . Mr. Bins was seen smiling his pleasant way."

Innocuous stuff, free of malice, and slim in import, but of such are the local happenings composed. Just what would occur, if a vice gang should appear on the scene, is difficult to imagine. With a fairly good murder case on their hands, it is possible the shock would cause the local press to fold up in horror. For in Bloomington there is no vice. From a moral aspect, it is a blameless town, and is beyond reproach. In the ten months that we have lived in it, nothing untoward has ever occurred to stir the becalmed community out of its natural stupor. Such things as murder or violence, or even robbery in a big way are unknown quantities. It is a town where you need neither lock nor key, a place in which your treasures and possessions are perfectly safe, left for hours in

an open house. Nor have I ever seen a single case of drunkenness on the streets or off. I once mentioned this observation to the local judge.

"Is Bloomington really as pure as it seems?" I asked him. "Or do you ever have a case of drunkenness in the town?"

"Well, I guess we do occasionally," he answered, with a downcast look, that showed plainly he did not like telling. "But we don't let them stick around. They get picked up good and sudden, and put away safe."

"And punished?" I inquired.

"Sure, ma'am, you bet they do," he said grimly.

Bloomington is a complete denial to the crass conceptions of American life that are distributed world wide from Hollywood. The gangster films, and worse, that are responsible for the impressions gained abroad are in no way representative of social conditions in Bloomington, and small as the town actually is, it is nevertheless indicative of American life in the real sense, since it nestles in the bosom of the great American mid-west, which is the kernel of the nation.

The average small American towns are models of sobriety, endorsing stern moral concepts of behavior that would put many a British town to shame. Bloomington, too, is very religious minded. It is a city of churches, and church activities play a very prominent part in the lives of the people. Every denomination is represented, and not one of them can complain of poor attendance. The Bible is still the Book in these parts, and is accepted fundamentally, in its full literal interpretation. It is quite common to hear a reflection of faith on the lips of people that appear flagrantly modern. Naive statements, told

with the simplicity that seems to be an inseparable part of the American make-up.

I was once recommended to try a certain brand of oatmeal for porridge.

"But you should try it, honey," a large dominant-looking lady, and a member of the faculty told me. "The farmer prepares it himself, and it comes with all the tares on it."

"Tares!" I echoed stupidly, caught unawares.

"Why, sure girl, don't you know? The tares! The same as they had in the Bible. It takes a long time to cook. We boil ours for eight hours, but when you can get the real holy stuff, it's worth it." There was such a righteous note in her voice that I forebore mentioning that for holy substance it seemed to require a precious lot of cooking.

In the town square at week ends, when the farmers are in possession, religious discussions hold sway. Several times I have hesitated to fight my way through a group that was engaged in fierce argument and looking likely to settle their differences by fists, a racing or football problem to all appearances, but which at close quarters turns out invariably to be some technical detail of theology. Once I found myself in the center of a raging argument, and oblivious of my trying to edge my way through, the battle of cross convictions continued unabated.

"The chariot was alight, I'm telling you, and none else, when Elijah got into it, and rode him way up there to heaven."

"'Tisn't so," shouted another. "'Twas no such thing. He was taken clean up by a whirlwind. It don't say he was ever in a chariot at all."

"And I'll have you know you've got it all wrong," thundered the other in a menacing voice. "The chariot was afire, and none else. Flames it was that

took him up, and wind that blew off his mantle. Sez so if you only read it proper, and our pastor will tell you the same thing any day.”

When I came out of the shop, Elijah's fate was still unsettled. The group had swollen considerably, and the square was slowly closing in on the prophet who was being tossed alternately between fire and whirlwind.

Such discussions will be continued hour upon hour by rigid fundamentalists, whose simplicity is astounding. They accept the written word without brooking denial, and woe betide anyone should they dare to contradict, or even moot a doubt. Time and again I am left marvelling at the naivete of the rural American. It runs counter to the avid pursuit of knowledge and lust for education that permeate the nation. It is a rare quality that neither university, lecture hall, nor public forum have yet destroyed, and despite all their claims to progress, the average American remains the most credulous and gullible listener it is possible to imagine. Enthusiasms will boil up and over, but the imposition of new ideas has not eradicated a fundamental simplicity. Something that in a generally overwrought and skeptical world is a highly refreshing aspect, and in this respect Bloomington is unique.

If our personal contacts have been slow, they have nevertheless been interesting and amusing, for life in a small American town has little in common with the traditional order of things in England. Customs have the same names, such as paying calls, dinner, and cocktail parties, and most of all, tea parties, but it is only the names that have a familiar sound. The events themselves have a way of rearing up and turning tail in a startling manner.

Our house was furnished and quite ready for visitors when our first callers arrived. By an unfortunate circumstance, we were not at home at the time, and for my part, I was frankly disappointed to have missed a close-up view of some of our neighbors. The three visiting cards that were left marked them down as being extremely formal, and when the maid told me that they had come by car, looking very elegant, my disappointment grew apace. I could hardly wait for a decent interval to elapse before returning the call. Martin tried to curb my impatience by omitting to procure new visiting cards.

"One will be ample," he kept saying, "and then quite possibly there won't be a place to plant it. If you insist upon being so formal, you can tear one into three parts. They will be equally impressed, and think that it is an old English custom."

But I refused to be put off, and eventually with my cards correctly with me, and dressed in my best attire, determined to do honor to my native land, we set out to return the call, a distance of some few hundred yards.

"They are out," sighed Martin thankfully, when after the first rat-a-tat the door remained stubbornly closed.

"It's polite to knock once more," I said, giving the knocker an extra loud bang, and at that footsteps began to patter in our direction. A fly wire door separated us from the main entrance, so that when the door opened just a pinch, we were left staring through the wire netting at the short, plump figure of a girl.

"Is Mrs. S at home?" I murmured, sticking my nose as far through the crack as I could get it.

"Well, she is and she isn't," came the astounding reply, at which I jumped on Martin's toe to prevent

anything equally astonishing from him. "You see, she's busy upstairs right now, fixing herself up for dinner. We're expecting some out-of-town visitors down shortly," she gabbled. Gaining confidence, she opened the door a little wider so that she might get a better view of us through the wire. "Well, my, now I know who you are!" she burst out suddenly, running her fingers over the netting as though she were idling beside a harp. "Pop was telling us. Gee, but I am real sorry that I didn't get a chance to go to some of your lectures, but then I graduated last fall, and right now I'm in a job down in Chicago."

Martin made a queer noise with his throat that sounded suspiciously like a dog, growling behind a wire cage, and which I tried to cover up by murmuring my regrets and trying to indicate cards that I should like to leave, when all at once she brought the interview to a sudden close by shrilling "Bye," in a long drawn-out howl, and banging the door in our faces on a remark that sounded like "I'll tell the folks that you called."

"Thank you, and good afternoon," said Martin bowing to the closed portal. "And that's that," he said with an arch twinkle which was meant to infer, "I told you so."

"But how on earth can a girl graduate from a university and yet be such a social savage?" I spluttered.

"Nothing of the sort," he returned airily. "She appeared to be a very nice girl with a definite standard of honesty. Mother is fixing herself up, and if that isn't candid, rather charming, I call it."

"Do you really mean to say that four years in a cultural institution cannot achieve better than that?"

"But she's probably a very bright child," persisted Martin in the same droll tone. "What you

have to learn is not to confuse education with social graces. The students come here for knowledge, not to learn manners, and the two do not necessarily co-ordinate. The latter they get by 'Post' written by 'Emily,' and that's a pretty solid volume, I'll have you know. One that our charming friend has probably not yet had time to study."

It was difficult to realize that he was actually stating a fact, but events have borne him out to be correct time and again. Manners according to the English example are not part and parcel of the American make-up, nor is there any particular reason why they should be. America is, after all, a different country, with an entirely different psychology, and composed of mixed peoples, and because she uses the same language is no reason for her to adopt a like standard of conduct. So that if, on first acquaintance, they appear gauche, and often ill-mannered, it is possibly a strong streak of English egotism within yourself that expects all people to conform to a standard pattern, and you soon come to learn that manners in the English sense are seldom an innate part of the American, and certainly not inculcated from the cradle.

Children are allowed to develop along very individual lines, exhibiting the best and the worst of themselves, very much as the spirit moves them, and when later on in life, manners are required, they are something to be picked up casually when and where the occasion demands. Emily Post has supplied the nation with a vast volume on etiquette, a book that serves as social mentor to a great majority. The trouble is that all too often it is not explored deeply enough and a too hasty glance may result in callers who leave three visiting cards, but who by the same token omit to find out what comes after,

and is likely to result in your standing on the door step and conducting a conversation through a wire door, feeling very much like a rabid dog that is refused admittance.

The important part that Emily Post plays in the general social development was amply illustrated when I came across a well-thumbed edition sitting face upwards on the center table in the reception room of a sorority house. In it is how to behave on all occasions from the cradle to the grave, and if studied to the full it is capable of converting the proverbial silk purse out of a sow's ear.

I have long ceased to be surprised at any social departure, knowing full well that nothing is ill-meant or intentionally barbaric, but rather that behavior stresses a more natural note and is exceedingly casual at that. So that later on when I was returning a call, and the daughter of the house kept me company on the doorstep while she munched an apple, I stayed for a few minutes, content to remain where I was, watching her take lusty bites of her fruit, while she explained that mother was upstairs washing her hair.

The girl happens to be the daughter of a professor, and is herself a university graduate. The whole family had recently returned from an extended European tour, and with a blissful disregard for the conventions, she proceeded to retail some of her experiences, relishing her story-telling and apple just one step above my head. She actually appeared disappointed when, having conducted me half way around Paris, I left her stranded at Napoleon's tomb.

"Well, it was swell seeing you. Come back again," she sang airily, as the door finally closed.

All hours are considered calling hours as we very soon discovered when we received what was apparently meant to be a formal call at nine P.M.

"We've just dropped in to visit you," the lady surprisingly announced, while the husband stood smilingly by. "I've been telling Tom these weeks past that we just must get around to calling, but you know how it is. Things pile up so, that time just gets away from you," and with a big sigh, she heaved off her coat, and settled in for a long, friendly chat.

She had brought with her a voluble fund of advice which she evidently felt it her bounden duty to impart to a newcomer.

"Town and gown don't mix," were among her first words of enlightenment. "The town doesn't call on the faculty, leastways they never have on us, have they, Tom?" at which Tom dutifully shook his head. His part seemingly was to sit by and nod and shake at the required time.

"You'll like Bloomington, though, when you get used to it," she assured me. "At first you're likely to find it strange. I know how it was when we first came. We are from the East, Philadelphia, you know. When I heard that you were from England, I told Tom I just had to get around to seeing you. I kind of felt we should have things in common, both being strangers here, in a way."

"Is this your first term here also?" I managed to get in at her first pause for breath.

"Bless your heart, no. Why, we've been here since after the war. Nineteen nineteen, wasn't it, Tom?"

"Nineteen eighteen," corrected Tom, with a broad grin at having spoken his first line.

"My, but it's so long that I'm forgetting," she bleated. "The town isn't much anyway, you'll find."

As though in the six months that we had been here, she expected me not to have seen it.

"I doubt if you're going to like it overmuch, but it doesn't matter because you just don't have any need for it. I make a point of never going down there, and that's a good way to commence and finish."

"But how on earth do you manage?" I interrupted, remembering that Indianapolis, the nearest large city, is fifty-two miles away.

"They eat by post," said Martin, in a voice that boded no good.

"It's not food she means," ventured Tom timidly. "Only clothes and things like that."

"Food we buy close to the campus," burst forth the lady again. "For my part, I would never go off the campus if I could help it. It's such a lovely life, and so full of interest that I stick as close as possible, and for the rest, I get all I need from Fifth Avenue," she announced on a note of triumph that was meant to be impressive.

"Really," murmured Martin, filling in an awkward pause, that was beyond me. "That sounds an extremely handy method of shopping, I should imagine," he said drily.

"Oh, but you have no idea how well it works out," she prattled on gleefully. "And I always feel that clothes from New York kind of keep me in touch. We've got that way now, that Tom even gets his socks down by mail. He thinks it's kinda snobbish of me, don't you, honey?" she said archly to Tom, "but I don't mind. It suits me fine and dandy, and I get what I want that way. The post service, too, is just fine."

I stole a glance at her assortment of clothes, pieces of her various garments dripping about her like distress signals. She was a medley of hues, and

all bundled together in such a way as to suggest that she might still be in the post, and waiting for the string to be untied.

Martin, who is quiet by nature, and not given much to small chat, has developed a verbose manner since we came to Bloomington. Perhaps it is to skim over thin ice, or through fear of my unruly tongue, but there are occasions these days when he suddenly waxes oratorical, and words pour from him as though he were a machine, and someone had just dropped in a coin. It is unnatural to him and consequently disconcerting, to hear his long, mirthless tirades about nothing in particular. Words seem to fly out of the ether, and falling into line, march solemnly like a regiment of soldiers, that nothing will halt until the parade is over. It was just such a march of words that filled in the gap before the lady had collected her second wind for the next bout.

Refusing stimulants, some tea had been served. I watched them gingerly handling tea cups and looking so ill at ease with the small plates that I found myself hovering between them ready to catch. It is customary here to stand the tea cup on the side of an outsize plate, that very sensibly does duty for saucer and plate combined. So that our service had presented them with a balancing feat that boded ill for my Royal Doulton. The anxious moment passed, however, without mishap, and when the china was once more settled in safety the lady immediately embarked upon a new trend of chat.

"Do tell me," she smirked. "I've been simply dying to ask you all evening, in fact, I warned Tom before we set out that I intended to say it the minute we arrived, you being English makes it so interesting, and I'm sure that you can tell us all about the royal romance and the abdication."

The Americans have an insatiable curiosity about the royal family. They will pump you to the last detail if they think you know anything, or so much as bat an eyelid, and if you happen to be in a mood for invention, you are assured a most attentive and gullible audience.

The abdication issue has confronted me many times since I arrived in America, and at the very mention of it these days, a devil starts to work within. Being English, they take it for granted that you are quite likely to be on intimate terms with the royal household, and when you assure them that you know probably less than they, since our press was infinitely more discreet at the time than theirs, they invariably scowl childishly at you, as though you are wilfully withholding something.

"But surely," persisted the lady, in a voice of acute disappointment, "how could you possibly live in a country and know so little about what was going on? I've been longing to hear the truth for ages. Didn't you even see them?"

"Well, only once," I remarked, responding suddenly to an evil genie, and not daring to look at Martin. "It was at Margate, or was it Ramsgate? I can't quite remember which, but they were paddling and hunting for shrimps."

"Shrimps?" echoed Tom, pushing forward his long yellow face.

"Prawns, in England," remarked Martin drily, butting into the mischief. "They live in the sand, you know. And then what?" challenged Martin.

"I was coming to it when you interrupted," I returned. "'What are you two doing?'" I greeted them, but at first they refused to answer, and when I raised my voice they waved me hastily off, and muttered something about my voice scaring away the shrimps.

"Please go away and mind your own business," was all that I could get out of them."

"Truly? How disappointing," said Martin, with one of his worst smiles.

"Quite truly," I returned, to the obvious disappointment of our guests.

It was ten-thirty before they made any signs of leaving, and before they finally departed they surprised us further by bursting into loud apologies for having delayed us in going out.

"But we had not intended going out tonight," I assured them.

"Well, it's real nice of you to say so," shrilled the lady, "but I'm sure all the same that we have made you late for your outing."

"That's one back for your shrimps," said Martin, when at last we had bowed them out and closed the door.

Another aspect of the Bloomington social whirl is not to offer or expect refreshments during a call, even though it should extend long beyond the quarter of an hour.

"Don't do it," begged a little German lady, a resident of some thirty years. "It's a charming custom, I know, but here in Bloomington, it is not done or expected, and to start it will create a precedent that we should all have to follow."

"But everyone accepts whatever I offer," I faltered.

"Of course," she wailed. "What would you expect? They love it, naturally, but it is unnecessary, and it seems a pity to break a sensible rule."

"Tea, especially during the afternoon, is not an American custom. Here it is a party drink, and that makes it so difficult for the rest of us."

In this respect, however, I have stood firm, and have refused to stifle a natural vein of hospitality even to please Bloomington. More than that, the teapot has been my saviour on many trying occasions, for it has bridged over many gaps, and infused a warmth into many an icy circle, and whenever the doorbell rings, I fly to the teapot and clutch it very much as a drowning man does a lifebuoy.

CHAPTER XVI

SOCIAL LIFE

The four o'clock tea pause that is an institutional part of English life is unknown in America, and an afternoon tea party in Bloomington has nothing whatsoever in common with an English function of the same name. Here it is merely an idea, it has been wafted overseas and serves as a title for a social gathering of people, invited between the hours of three and six. Usually it turns out to be a freak repast that is a cross between breakfast and supper, and where none of the familiar tea spread will appear. There will, for instance be no delicate sandwiches, thin bread and butter, scones, hot toasted teacake or even cakes of the well-known order. Instead you are likely to be offered anything from a sausage to handful of nuts, and that spans a wide variety of foods such as chopped liver, pickled cucumbers, olives, hors d'oeuvres to chocolates and nuts. The nuts serve as a finishing touch, and supply a comic relief to the strange beverages that are consumed under the auspices of a "tea party."

The favorite drink is usually Coca Cola, a sweet, brown-colored, aerated fluid that tastes and looks like diluted black treacle. Coffee runs a close second, while tea plays a negligible part, and is seldom in evidence. When it does appear, it presents such a pathetic sight that it is surprising there should be any demand for it at all. For as well as being faintly tinged water, Bloomington hostesses always insist upon serving it at a tepid temperature. A combina-

tion of atrocities has reduced it to a state of cold despair long before it reaches you, and the people who imbibe the miserable stuff, take it neat, so that milk seldom appears on the scene. Cream is the common diluter for tea and coffee alike, and being English, I am usually proffered the cream jug with an amused smile that seems to infer that we are people given to strange customs.

My first tea party proved to be something of a revelation, and when my stomach had ceased revolting at the medley of ill-assorted foods parading the circle, I at last clutched a biscuit in defense, and viewed the assembly. In effect, it was as prim and proper as a mission meeting. A curious unnatural stiffness seemed to pervade all social events in Bloomington. Good behavior is an outer garment that is worn on all occasions, and it is devoid entirely of subtlety or humor. The mid-west cannot be described as a pivot of humor, the vast prairie lands are not productive of fun, and in Bloomington humor seems to be "non-est." The people view life from a too close range, and things are apt to loom serious, heavy and prosaic. They lack laughter, and least of all do they ever laugh at themselves. By contrast to their ramrod severity, English formality becomes a frivolous escapade. When humor does transpire it is unintentional, and never meant, like the professor's wife who bestirred herself to cross the room and take the chair next to me, announcing "She had come to visit with me," a term which means she had come to chat. It took me a full moment to accustom myself to the sight of her, and at first I thought that a burning bush inspired by Moses had blazed up to chasten me.

A tall, gaunt creature, her face naked and unadorned, except for her large, projecting teeth, she

was clad in a vast scarlet cotton dress, tied limply in the middle with an equally red ribbon. Her sandy-colored hair, scragged back under a tight skull cap effect, made her look like dead grass that had burst into flames.

"Do you like Bloomington?" was her first remark, and in a voice that dared me to state otherwise.

"Delightful," I murmured politely.

"Well, that's just fine, and just like it should be. This is a splendid town. It rates well with any, I guess. Unusual, don't you think?"

"Most," I assured her, naively, forbearing to mention from what aspect.

Perhaps it was the fault of my roving eye that simply could not detach itself from the sight of her heaving bosom, threatened by flames, that suddenly caused her to remark upon her dress.

"It's a swell red, isn't it?" she said, smoothing it fondly.

"Very," I blinked. "It looks warm."

"Yeah, I know, but it isn't. It's only cotton. I'm indulging a fancy of mine," she said archly.

"Oh, really? How?" I said politely, seeing that she longed to tell a story.

"Well, it was this way. I got a terrible longing for red stockings, and I got so that I felt if I didn't get them, I'd die, but believe it or not, I hunted high and low, but there was not a pair of red stockings to be got throughout the States. Can you make that out? It seemed kinda odd to me."

"Most odd," I remarked, wondering if she referred to her legs that were suddenly shot out like two overgrown pump handles.

"Fred knew how I felt about it," she went on, nodding in the direction of her husband. "He helped me look all summer. Then when it looked kinda hope-

less, I found this gorgeous red stuff, and decided to get myself a red dress instead. The dressmaker ran it up so that I can wear it here. Satisfying shade, I think, don't you?"

"Very," I replied, stealing a glance at her lugubrious looking husband who was sitting sleepily in a chair near by. Could he be a professor of psychology, I wondered—one of the advanced thinkers, who believed in curing secret desires with outward manifestations?

I was prevented from learning more, however, by another guest, who came floating through the ether, and who with a curt gesture, put out the "fire," and took charge of the seat.

"Dear me," she commenced, in a nasal voice that was half sigh and half snuffle. "I thought I should never get to visit with you. Time gets away so fast at these parties." She dabbed her nose with a fragment of lace between each word. "And is Bloomington suiting you pretty well?" she whimpered.

"Admirably, so far," I replied politely.

"Well, that's just fine now. I only hope that it goes right on that way. It's bad for some folks," she sniffled again. "Just terrible if you suffer with sinus. Not that it's fair to judge by me. I'm pretty well a wreck by now, I guess." My regrets, barely audible, passed unnoticed as she proceeded to dab and sniff out her words. "Of course we've tried most places from east to south. In New York the gas fumes pretty near settled me, and in the south the bugs were just torture. Not that this place is a whole lot better on account of the quarries."

"The quarries?" I pondered, trying to appear intelligent, not having heard mention of them before.

"Stone," she went on. "The dust, you know, is just fatal to sinus people, but I've got that way now

that I'm allergic to almost everything, I guess. I just don't dare to think about it. But you know how it is with sinus people, I guess." If I didn't know before, I had a pretty good idea before the brief visit was concluded, for she spent the entire time wringing her nose between syllables, and puffing out her nostrils, like a pair of overworked bellows.

One fleeting visit was followed by another, and each person prefaced his talk by mention of Bloomington, taking it for granted that I considered it a most superior town, and one well above the average. Tutored well by Martin, before we had set out, I seemed to have made the right answers every time, for in each case I noted a slight unbending before I was treated to a line of personal anecdote.

There was one woman, however, who found me dull company indeed. I had gabbled my piece so often the words were beginning to dry up within.

"And how do you spend your days?" she surprised me by asking in a condescending voice, a curious departure of custom for Bloomington.

"Walking," was the only thing I could think of to answer, prompted no doubt by a deep desire to breathe some fresh air.

"Walking!" she cried, sitting bolt upright, as though I had announced that I went on stilts. "Well, just imagine that now, in these days. I didn't think there was anyone left with time to spare."

"Apparently not," I agreed. "The streets for the most part are deserted."

"That shouldn't surprise you in a university town," she thumped back at me. "Everyone is so busy. I know, speaking for ourselves that we hardly get time to breathe. But then you English have always gone in for walking, haven't you?"

"And bathing," I smiled sweetly. "Prodigious time wasters, in fact."

I have since discovered why it is that the streets are swept clean of life, and what it is that keeps Bloomington people busy from dawn to dusk. The secret of their hide and seek existence is club life. All America goes in for clubs on a grand scale. From end to end of the continent there are hundreds of thousands of clubs, and it is a poor town indeed that cannot furnish an organization to suit all types of the community.

In this respect, Bloomington has leaned over backward, and proved itself to be an incorrigible joiner, for in this small out-of-the-way section, there are more than two hundred clubs, all set up and functioning. Their objects are manifold. Some devote themselves to book reviews, others to music and play reading, while there are some with more serious aspirations that work for a voice in politics, and strive ardently for social reform. And again, there are many that are merely social entities. So that with such a welter of organized activities, it is no wonder the time gets swallowed up in great gulps.

Most of the social hives belong to the women, and twenty-one of these bleat under Greek letter titles that lend an air of classical illusion. If the Greeks had a name for it, the Americans have certainly gone to great lengths in ferreting it out, by using the entire Greek alphabet from Alpha to Omega and plastering their portals with all manner of classical delineations.

There are no less than one hundred and sixty-two straight-going clubs in Bloomington that are affiliated either with churches, councils, or lodges. Some of these indulge in intriguing titles, such as the Stitch-and-Chatter Club, the Talk-a-Lot Club, and

one that supplies an ironic touch to the deserted town is called the Walk-a-Lot Club. Obviously their jaunts take them beyond the city limits.

The male organizations compose a small part of this list, since their rendezvous centers only add up to twelve or fifteen. Apart from the number of established organizations that comprise the town proper, there are as well, thirty-eight fraternities and sororities, as well as countless specialized clubs, and scholastic honoraries that are sponsored by each of the university departments. Added to this are numerous small clubs of the mushroom variety that afford a big croak to a small frog. Any excuse is good enough for club-forming, as was proved recently when a self-styled select body banded together, and set themselves up as the town's official greeters. They have to work somewhat subversively, since if their objects were broadcast, it is possible that others might forestall them, and filch the prize from under their nose.

The whole purpose of their existence is to meet all celebrities counted worthy of their notice, people with names with national sounding significance who pass through Bloomington. The moment an illustrious name appears in print, heralding arrival, the greeters make ready to spread their net, and carry their victim off to a secret haunt. This usually happens at a time when the hapless person is aching from fatigue and craving rest after a long journey, a musical recital, or a technical lecture. The glory of greeting and basking for a spell in reflected glory undoubtedly adds luster to small people of a small town, but at the same time it must constitute a rare form of purgatory to their victims.

A tea party given under the auspices of several leading clubs, and arranged to give welcome to new-

comers to Bloomington was an event that befell me early after arrival. It was an illuminating experience, if only from the angle of seeing so many people together at one time. At first sight it appeared that the whole community had turned out "en masse" for the welcoming.

The function was held at a medium-sized house, a place that appeared totally inadequate to deal with the arriving horde. A maid was posted at the entrance, who at sign of approach, flung open the door, and with a curt thumb, motioned you upstairs to shed your coat. It is a custom in America to slip off your coat the moment you step within walls, whether the occasion be strictly formal or otherwise. During the winter all buildings, private and public, are warmed by a central system of heating, so that a coat indoors immediately becomes a stifling burden. Warm houses, small and large alike, are one very distinct advantage that America holds over England. The Americans spell comfort in capital letters, a state in which everyone shares, and it seems an infinitely wiser and more considerate plan to stoke one fire that will warm an entire house, rather than the English method of lighting one fire in one room that leaves the rest of the house to freeze. Nevertheless, the American system gives rise to amusing spectacles, that of guests arriving and standing in rows like a line of oranges waiting to be peeled.

This being a public function, the guests were being waved upstairs to do their own peeling, so that the undressed ones were filing down one-half of the staircase, while the coated arrivals rubbed shoulders with them on the way up. The one small bedroom presented a chaotic sight. The bed itself was obliterated and threatened to collapse beneath the stack of coats, while the overflow filled up the chairs and

covered the floor. It looked as close to a bargain basement sale at the end of a hectic day as it is possible to imagine. As there was no one in attendance or anyone to shepherd you through the strange proceeding, there was nothing to do but add your coat to the nearest pile, and wander downstairs and locate your hostess. But to my shame, I never discovered her. That she was one of the many hostesses scattered about, I am convinced, but which one remained a mystery, for in the ensuing interval events took such bewildering and confusing shape that I soon lost the ability to discern clearly. The hostesses were a distinguished body of people, garbed in flowing evening attire. They swam through the chattering crowd, gathering up any strangers who appeared in their midst, and escorting them post-haste on a long tour of introduction.

The Americans are prodigious introducers. No one is ever allowed to get out of a house before first completing a round of personal presentation. I had no sooner reached the foot of the stairs than a diaphanous creature glided my way, and demanding my name, took me by the hand, and conducted me on a personal voyage of introduction. Round and round we went, circling the room at a dizzy rate, breaking into conclaves, violating group after group, without so much as pausing for breath, until I had been presented to the entire assembly. The guests were dressed, for the most part, in black, so much so that the room appeared to have been invaded by a flock of black crows, and not one distinguishable from the other. Each one grabbed my hand in welcome, chanting without variation, "I'm so glad to know you." I had great difficulty in asking why each time, knowing full well that it was hopeless to recognize the first or last of them again.

When the introductions were concluded, and my hand was thankfully out of use for a spell, my guide and mentor ushered me into a small adjoining room for refreshments, this being the tea party. Six or eight chairs were set primly along the wall, while at the table in the center of the room were two of the hostesses presiding over tea and coffee.

Like a wall flower, indeed, I sat where I was put, feeling like an orphan appearing before her benefactors, until another trailing drape swam towards me, and demanded my wants. "Tea or coffee?" she barked, like an overwrought waitress.

"Coffee," I said defiantly, after watching the anemic brew that was sobbing its way out of the samovar. By this time several other people had been escorted into the room, and were now propped along the wall. But in the tea annex no one spoke or passed comment. Instead they maintained a solid silence, sitting rigidly in place, and balancing tea cups, as though they were part of the wall paper pattern.

I had no sooner accepted my coffee when someone else appeared before me, holding a large dish of nuts, and without waiting to hear yes or no, she thrust a spoonful into my hand. Taken unawares, the nuts proved the crowning point of my discomfort, for not being prone to salted nuts at any time, and least of all as a tea repast, and worse still, with no place to deposit them, I kept them shut tight in my moist, unhappy palm, squirming inwardly at the prickly sensation of sweltering salt.

At that unfortunate moment my original shepherd floated back to the scene, dragging another creature along with her, whom she forthwith proceeded to present to me, and before I had realized my error, I

shot out the hand containing the nuts in greeting. As I listened to them pelting the floor, like a sudden shower of hail, I was all at once paralyzed with embarrassment. In the general scrimmage that ensued, with everyone suddenly protesting in a loud voice not to bother, I made a hasty exit, and fled up the stairs to recover my coat, my one desire being to get out of the house as quickly and as quietly as possible.

"Pardon me," rapped out a sharp voice, just as I was leaving the bedroom, "but I didn't get your name properly." I looked around still feeling hot and uncomfortable to meet a pair of piercing eyes that matched the voice fixed upon me. I repeated my name weakly. "And the address?" she demanded. Once again I proffered the required information, too confused to ask her why.

"I do just like to know whom I am meeting on these occasions," she said severely. "It's all a waste of time otherwise. I'm the vice-president of the club, you know," at which she gabbled off a high sounding Greek phrase that was no doubt meant to be impressive, but which in my unguarded moment caused me to turn and flee, mindful of a voice within that warned "to beware of the Greeks."

2

Outside, the snow flurries, loosely falling, were a cool and blessed relief to the overheated and grim social action of Bloomington feminine worthies, and the walk home through the snow-piled streets that had miraculously accumulated in the short interval restored my equanimity, and I could laugh at myself.

Snow is one of the outstanding charms of the American winter. The swift, quiet falls cast a spell over the place, and unlike the long dismal periods of rain, peculiar to England in wintertime, that gradually reduce you to nil, the white American winter produces a vigor, and fans an inward excitement for the soft lie of untrampled beauty.

At times Bloomington has presented a fairy spectacle. Six or seven inches of snow have covered roof tops and burdened the trees, and lined the streets until roads and pavements are leveled into unbroken virgin tracks, so that the first foot marks appear as a desecration, and the stillness pervading the air has a rare tranquil quality, that obliterates the normal effect of the unfrequented streets. The crisp gleaming tracks are yours to pattern and explore, something which is both exciting and satisfying.

At Christmas-time, when the town was deep under snow, the scene was greatly enhanced by the Christmas trees that appeared on white frosted lawns, and were lit with myriad-colored lights. Some houses went to extravagant lengths in decorations, and as well as lighted trees in the garden, a line of lights was strung necklace fashion round the entire house. And then to crown the effect, another lighted tree was placed in the center window. Street after street presented a similar sight, so that at night in the intense white stillness, it was more like a painted picture than reality.

Christmas trees enjoy a special place of honor in America, and appear to be the main garnishing feature of the season, for in Bloomington there was barely a house, from the top of Vinegar Hill, a name bestowed upon the exclusive residential area, to the more lowly quarters of timbered dwellings, that did

not exhibit a tree of sorts in the front window embellished with colored lights.

And yet, despite the many outward accents, there is a certain spontaneity and surge of warmth lacking. The kind that serves to wield the uniting influence of people from end to end of Britain. Christmas time in America is a bauble of many hues, diversified by many elements and extraneous customs, that culminates in the lighted Christmas tree. Perhaps it is because the original story of the Nativity is too crudely overlaid by the imposition of commercial enterprise.

Whether it be Easter, Thanksgiving, or Christmas, the same sort of thing prevails. Every season is heralded by a concerted business drive, in which radio, newspapers, and screen are all pressed into service. It is a concerted and efficiently planned process that serves to nullify the natural order of being, except that the season is guaranteed to return gross profits to all who deal in commodities. This is most flagrantly illustrated in many of the large stores at Christmas-time, when during an intensive business campaign, when the public is being urged and urged again to spend and choose presents from the bewildering array of merchandise, it is entertained by choir boys who, surpliced and often swinging incense, parade the shops singing carols. These are provided by the firms as an extra bait to charm the dollars should the gush of spending threaten to dry up. I found it a crude spectacle and an ugly intrusion of spiritual barter.

By contrast the gaily-lighted town streets are void of the familiar urchin carol singers, nor are there any "Waits" who would seem a justifiable addition to the highly decorative street scene.

III

Christmas came and went with not so much as a ripple to disturb the calm. The only evidence that we gathered of the season's presence was from the turkey bones that were deposited at the back door by our canine friends. Intuitive little beasts, they bore us close company throughout the holidays. We had no regrets for our Yuletide spent in splendid isolation, but when New Year approached, I became restless. I wanted to sing "Auld Lang Syne," march and shout in human company.

"But they may not sing Auld Lang Syne in these parts," Martin argued. "It would possibly be considered ribald. And then again where are such things as old acquaintances? I'll bet they go in for 'John Brown's Body' in a big way."

"All right," I conceded. "Just lead me to a New Year's party and I'll sing 'Yankee Doodle' for them." And so sooner was the promise made than the telephone rang, with someone inviting us to a celebration. My spirits soared so high at the prospect, that I refused to be downcast by the hostess' voice, who kept impressing upon me that it was not a regular party.

"We've just asked a few friends in who have no place to go. All kind of loose ends, and I thought, being New Year, it would be nice if we could all get together. But don't expect a party, because it will be no such thing."

"It's likely to be a very jolly affair," I told Martin when we set out dressed in our best clothes. "Impromptu parties are always the brightest, I find."

"But these are all loose ends, remember," warned Martin, in a knowing voice. "They may have a tendency to stay ragged."

"Well, then, we'll set about tying them together," I flung back, and purposely avoided sight of Martin who had commenced to fidget with his dress collar.

It was the largest one that he owned, nevertheless, it was a size too small. Not that the rest of his suit fitted him any better. It is the last treasure of his youth, and he refuses absolutely to be parted from it. The suit was his for his first college dance, and he is still wearing it fourteen years later, declaring every time the subject is broached that it's as good as new, and that despite the fact that he has grown considerably in the long interval. The coat now has no tail at all, and just skims his waist line, while the sleeves cling like poison ivy to his long arms, ending abruptly below his elbows. If anything is calculated to dampen my spirits on any occasion, it is the sight of Martin grown to a full six feet, and sallying forth in perfect sangfroid, clad in a garment that comes close to presenting him in tights. His worst comment is: "Men's styles don't change, and so long as it hasn't any holes, it will serve."

"Do your best to hold your shrunken woollens together," I smiled sweetly as we reached our destination. Over-anxious not to miss any of the party, we turned out to be the first arrivals, and sat through a full half hour of desultory chat before the other loose ends drifted in.

They were six in all, and at first sight they looked the most dispirited and abject group, resembling fugitives from persecution, rather than party revelers, as they flung themselves into chairs, amid loud sounding sighs and laments. A considerate host and one eager to produce good humor, quickly passed a round of egg nogs, and followed it up with another that helped to loosen up flagging tongues.

"My but I think the New Year has something real sad about it," quavered one lady, "if you know what I mean. What's gone by, well you know about it, but what's coming takes a mighty lot of guessing. It sort of sets me queer inside to think about it."

"Molly lost her mother last year," whispered the man nearest to me, "and I guess she's feeling a bit churned up right now. It's only to be expected."

"Quite," I murmured, beginning to feel balked of the party spirit, and not daring to look at Martin, who was leaning nonchalantly on the mantel shelf, with his arm in such a position that his coat threatened to rip in two.

"Suggest some singing," I said, sidling up to him. "This is turning into a wake."

"My wife would like to sing," he said at once, in an unnaturally loud voice.

"Not alone," I burst in. "All together, I mean."

"Yes, that's an idea," said Martin, moving over to the piano, and dragging me along with him. "Now who can play?" he challenged.

With that the hostess obligingly sailed across the room, took her seat at the piano, and lightly fingering the keys, inquired politely what were the preferences. As no one had any suggestions to offer and the New Year was practically upon us, I begged for "Auld Lang Syne."

"Is that an English custom?" simpered one lady with the kind of blue eyes that seemed to work on an electric switch.

"Scotch origin," I explained, "but a hardy British annual, all the same." With which I endeavored to get the party on to its feet and to form a circle with cross-locked hands. But the process was beyond me, for they twisted and screwed their arms into such a hopeless tangle, and decided at last that if

they had to sing the song just to oblige me, they preferred to do their part standing stiffly in a row looking for all the world like a pale line of *primulas*. This left Martin and me severely alone in the center of the room, roaring our song and thumping our arms for all we were worth.

"This was your idea," whispered Martin between choruses.

"I know, but I'm getting it out of my system," I sang back at him. A half-hearted community singing followed as the New Year duly arrived. But it was such a meek and dispirited attempt that it very soon petered out altogether, and was replaced by a volume of local chatter, the sort of stuff that drew the party into a close huddle, but which left us silently listening and looking on.

When our exclusion seemed almost complete, a sudden loud knocking at the front door heralded some new arrivals, and once again we were presented in the American detailed fashion, with everyone wringing our hands, and exclaiming loudly their very great pleasure in having met us.

"Well, this is grand," said one man, with a violent handshake. "We've been promising ourselves to call on you these weeks past, but we just haven't had time to get around." And before I had an opportunity to murmur some polite reply, he had turned tail and rejoined the local group that was clustered about the table where the drinks were, hugging and shrieking hysterically, one to the other. Once Martin attempted to break through the group, and snatch two drinks, just to make us feel that we were with them, if very much on the edge. But the most that he could manage was one, and that we took back to the lounge, and shared, sipping it between endless cigarettes.

"They don't like us," I said ruefully to Martin as we listened to one hilarious scream succeeding another. "Perhaps it's your suit."

"Nonsense," he exclaimed. "It's more like to be your naked back," with which he ran a cold finger down my spine. "Besides," he went on, "that last chap has almost twisted my arm off. He was so excited to clap eyes on me."

"That's just an old American custom," I returned sourly. "They exclaim pleasure by instinct. It doesn't mean a thing. And I'm beginning to be suspicious of it."

"Well, don't," he grinned. "It's their way of expressing courtesy, just as this is their way of having a party. It's all a matter of custom. You like to sing and dance, they prefer to shriek and hug."

"Then why not be sociable about it? It's a pity their idea of courtesy doesn't extend a little further," I grumbled.

The climax came when after having entertained ourselves for a full hour, and being tired and bored beyond endurance, we decided to leave.

"Let's sneak out," I suggested. "It will be a pity to break up anything," with which we fished for our hats and coats, and were on the point of a secret exit, when our hostess spotted us.

"Hello there," she screamed. "You're surely not going yet. Why, it's early," but on this we remained firm, and edged close to the door, which seemed to be a signal for the party to come unlocked. Falling upon us in one great swoop, they insisted upon another hearty round of handshakes, with everyone chorusing exactly the same words.

"Well, goodbye, there. Have a happy New Year, we've so enjoyed meeting you."

"You see," said Martin, when the door finally closed, "they have actually enjoyed meeting us. It was universal approval, and I can't imagine what further proof you require."

Dinner parties are another topsy-turvy function to which I have not yet become properly acclimatized, for here again custom indulges in a series of freak antics that never fail to startle me, and leave me feeling totally inadequate. If the occasion be formal, then you can be quite sure that an unnatural stiffness will prevail, the kind that stirs destructive desires within, and makes you long to smash a tumbler or break a plate, anything by way of a diversion that may cause a thaw to set in. A forlorn wish, really, since the Bloomington quality of dignity is guaranteed not to crack under the worst of usage.

So far it seems that I have been unfortunate in my dinner partners. It may be purely coincidence and not representative of the community generally, but for my part, the male members, and particularly the professors whom I have encountered on these occasions, could seldom be described as nimble-minded, much less stimulating company. Usually they are completely lacking in social adroitness, and are content to bask in utter silence. Even the commonest demands of sociability go by the wall, so that conversation is impossible to sustain. To be wedged between two such people is to feel something like a banned edition, stuck between a pair of disapproving bookends for the evening.

In any case, English humor is a waste of time, simply because it is not understood. Americans deal in an altogether different variety, a kind that is blatant and obvious, and if you don't happen to roar loudly at a joke that is apparent as a sign post, you are judged humorless and dull-witted. A joke that is

told against the English and retailed often for my benefit is never to tell an Englishman a joke on Saturday, lest he laugh at it on Sunday in church.

Among the series of dinner time surprises is the custom of setting a beautiful show plate before each guest, and then whisking them up and putting them aside before the dinner appears. Domestic help is especially scarce in Bloomington, so that service is always a prolonged and tedious affair.

Of one thing you can be quite sure, that your helping of meat will have had time to get nicely settled into a casing of cold fat, long before the final round of vegetables has reached you. Everything will be handed separately and very slowly in a long ceremonious parade. And just when you imagine that the last possible thing is on your plate another dish is bound to be tilted over your left shoulder.

Added to this there is a pageant of food, gloriously ill-assorted, doing a succession of rounds, which is passed by the guests themselves. Such things as hot rolls, butter, olives, pickles, celery, and preserves. The last being a dish of jam, usually raspberry, that appears on every dinner table, and is consumed with the hot buttered rolls, either with the soup or meat course. The sight of the jam dish never fails to dry up my gastric juices, and cause me to resort to a long draft of water. Jam and meat appear to be a custom in the mid-west, for I have encountered it in Illinois as well as in Indiana. The two foods make a strange and alien mixture that is something like serving sherry with breakfast. I always suffer a pang of nausea when I see a man consuming thick pieces of bread and jam between mouthfuls of meat and vegetables. Sweet courses with meat are very common in these parts, and it is not unusual to be served pineapple, prunes, and peaches, together with sweet potatoes, in place of vegetables with meat.

What is missed at a dinner party in conversation is amply compensated for in passing dishes. The ceremony is highly reminiscent of the Mad Hatter's tea party. Things go round and round, being passed from one to the other without cease. No sooner is one round completed than another has commenced. The result is that your hands are never out of use, for when you are not catching things over your shoulder, you are passing dishes, so that eating becomes a case of snatch-a-mouthful-when-you-can. For some reason or other, this custom of passing things comes extremely difficult to me. It found me out on the first occasion, when I unwittingly called a halt to the regular procedure by squirming at the sight of the jam, and hastily dropping the dish on the nearest clear space, a social error that resulted in a strained moment of silence, and all at once I had become the cynosure of all eyes. Somewhere out of the torrid silence, I caught Martin's barely audible whisper, "Pass along, please." This much I have gathered since, however, that a dinner party is plainly a case of every man for himself, for no one would ever dream of helping his neighbor, or even holding the dish whilst you helped yourself. Fair's fair and the dish is yours to take or pass along as you wish, so long as you do not fail to keep things moving, and maintain a service which is strictly individual and extremely precise.

Among my many surprises at my first dinner party was to see my hostess being served first with each course as it appeared. For one moment I marked it down as a social error on the part of the waitress, but since it continued throughout the meal, I soon realized that it was not accidental. Also the sight of the hostess herself belied any such idea, for she sat mounting guard over her own portion, looking like

a graven image of propriety, while the rest of the table cast surreptitious glances along to her plate to see what was coming next. It so happened that I was sitting on the right hand of my host, and had vainly imagined myself to be the guest of honor. But whether or not this was intended I never discovered. If so, I was definitely the last one to be served, and if my vanity was piqued, I at least had the satisfaction of keeping the other eleven people waiting until my share duly arrived.

In Bloomington ladies are not served first. Instead the plates travel in direct order of line, commencing with the hostess, and if you happen to be unlucky, you will be a belated last. Hostess-first is obviously the general rule in Bloomington, for I have since encountered it many times, both formally and otherwise. It is a curious departure from the English rule, and it has a distinct effect of keeping a guest in hand, and preventing him from any inflated idea as to his own importance.

CHAPTER XVII

CAMPUS

The University of Indiana is the pampered child of the State. It is a very vigorous infant that is growing by leaps and bounds, and one that well justifies the care and consideration that is showered upon it.

Enshrined in a picturesque setting, it occupies a considerable portion of Bloomington, and can actually be described as the sinews of the town, for without the University Campus to its credit, Bloomington would sink into obscurity and languish by the wayside, unnoticed except by the freight trains that rumble through and shake the domain at frequent intervals.

Campus life is a thing apart, remote and strangely impersonal to its surroundings. During the academic year the scene is fused with activity that is light-hearted, casual in the extreme, and completely carefree, something that typifies all university life throughout the United States. There are more than five thousand students at Indiana University, and they are as impermanent as the flowers in spring. They bloom for a prolonged season of adolescence, happy in their world apart, before life in its more serious aspects claims them.

Mass education is a fundamental principle of American democracy, and is one of its most highly cherished ideals. It wields a very positive arm and operates on a vast scale. Each of the forty-eight states maintains at least one state university, and

often more, so that there are cultural institutions in plenty and more than enough to accommodate the millions of youthful aspirants. The ideal in its original design, aiming as it does for mental and physical progress, is worthy in the extreme, but in effect it does not prove to be the altogether highfaluting and cultural success for which it was ordained.

College is the ambition of the average American youth, and irrespective of whatever station in life he occupies, it is more than likely that the idea will be fostered by his parents from the cradle up. It is the crescendo note in the American scheme of education, and without those extra four years of knowledge a man or a woman is considered unequipped to face life. The popular appeal that college exercises in the minds of American youth is amply illustrated by the fact that one in every twelve of them are in universities, and the institutions are so planned that any who have the wish and will to enter can do so.

Students for the most part enter college with a boundless zest, and leave it with many regrets, for college, as the average American knows it, means four years of fun, an extension of childish things with plenty of hard playing, friend-finding and love-making; seasons of ball games with all the accompanying fanfare; hayrides, skating, swing music and dancing, and the class room as a subordinate last.

While his British counterpart is out in the world, coming to grips with life, American youth can be seen and heard in fraternity gardens and often in the street, playing ball and screaming, like wild tribes of over-grown children. Most of them are fully grown men, and exhibiting an undisciplined exuberance that is difficult to reconcile with a cultural institution. At the end of four years, when they have duly graduated and won the coveted diploma, they emerge from col-

lege as gauche as when they entered. Nor is there any evidence of the refinement of mind and gesture that is normally associated with the study of the classics and fine arts.

Mass education does not produce the cultural and scholarly attainments for which it aspires. On the contrary, the system is fraught with a good deal of fallacious thinking, and American youth has yet to learn the very small connection between school and earning power. Far too many Americans today, equipped with college diplomas, are hunting the jobs they blissfully imagined were waiting for them, while numbers are filling positions that trusted simpletons could successfully fulfill.

"Why did you go to college?" I asked an elevator boy recently who, when he noticed our luggage labels, announced that he was a graduate of Indiana.

"Because when I left school I couldn't find a job," came the prompt reply. "So I kinda figured out that college would fill in four years, then maybe I'd be able to land something swell."

"And did you?" I asked.

"Well, I guess not. Here's where I've got, but gee, I had a swell time. It sure was a hell of a lot of fun."

A salesman in a local shoe store was another who boasted of being a graduate.

"Indiana's a fine school," he informed me as he tied my shoe laces. "I got my B. S. degree at Indiana."

Exactly what his degree had profited him I forebore to inquire. He was a man fast approaching middle age, and selling shoes seemed to be his vocational bent. These two cases are not singular, but they serve to illustrate what is occurring to countless university graduates. Diplomas have become so

common today that numbers of employers with unskilled positions to offer will refuse to engage anyone but a university graduate. It is an altogether illogical request, and an absurd demand. Nevertheless, it is the outgrowth of a system that is turning loose hordes of text-book theorists, who with a cap and a gown to their credit count themselves lucky to be measuring off yards of ribbon, selling shoes and merchandise, and generally acting as shop assistants.

Admittance to a state university is simplicity itself. A student needs nothing more than his high school graduation plus a very nominal fee. Education is for all, and since the entire system is animated by politics, all are encouraged to eat of the fruit. The pity is that vocational aptitude plays a very small part.

Students arrive without a set course in mind, and will run a very casual eye over the classes available, selecting those which sound the most attractive. If these should turn out to be dull and not what was expected, they simply go through the catalogue again and make a fresh selection. Then again, love will play quite an important part in the choice of courses, and as the term proceeds, and love affairs develop apace, a considerable amount of changing transpires. For example, a girl in love prefers to be in the same class as her boy friend, and vice versa.

"It's such a shame," one girl told me, recently, "but I shall have to alter some of my classes next semester," and when I inquired why, she informed me that one of her latest admirers was becoming too attentive.

"He has changed from French to my German class, and altered his psychology period, and now I hear that we shall be meeting for history. Gee, but it's

just awful the way he's following me around. I'll just have to do Spanish I guess, to avoid him."

Another girl one day was bemoaning one of her professors. "That class is so dull!" she exclaimed. "It's just a boress," boress being a word much used in Indiana to explain a session of general discussion not necessarily instructive.

"Don't I know it!" sang her friend. "I had that class for half a semester. Why don't you switch to Professor M's class? He's just darling, and so handsome. It doesn't matter what he says I just enjoy sitting and looking at him."

Selecting classes, particularly among the girls, is a very haphazard venture, and just how some of them manage to scrape through their examinations is beyond conjecture.

Many of the freshmen with whom I have spoken have no idea of their ultimate aim in life.

"Oh, I may do law if I make the grade, or medicine. I don't know yet. I'll just stick around with a few classes and see how I make out. If not, I can always take the business course."

These sorts of remarks are quite common utterances. Unfortunately, the state universities have come to be regarded by the students purely as a place wherein they will attain credit for a specified number of hours spent in the classrooms and a diploma with which to earn them a livelihood.

Culture, in the finer sense, plays a small part in their reckoning. For one thing, many of the most popular courses do not include a study of the classics or fine arts, such as business administration, hotel management, radio script writing, and home economics; the latter being a glorified course of house-keeping. I have yet to meet a student who is familiar with the poets or European literature, and less still

the art of painting. Even the most brilliant among them, those who have achieved high grades in their various departments, are completely dumb when it comes to a discussion of the arts.

The dearth of cultural attributes may be partly responsible for the manner of strange behaviour that animates the student body, for American students en masse are sadly lacking where social graces are concerned.

One ambition of the male element is to maintain a generally disheveled and untidy appearance. It is rare to meet a student clad in a regular suit, wearing a collar and tie, the more popular fashion being to achieve a vagabond effect, which is accomplished by wearing a number of odd garments at one time. More often than not, a youth will appear to be dressed for a fancy dress ball, rather than the class room. I have met numbers of them slumping around the campus, clad in such things as bright green corduroy trousers, blue socks, and white shoes, a red sweater slashed with another striking color, a sandy lumber jacket, and this may quite likely be crowned with a hat of still another shade. Open shirts are of course the general order, and when summer comes these are discarded entirely. The general effect from the masculine angle is one of disarray and slovenly in the extreme.

Those few who favor hats seem to stick them on with some sort of adhesive tape at the commencement of the semester, and keep them there for the entire period. For never on any occasion are they lifted, either in salute or for any other reason. And since they eat and drink with them on, and wear them to parties, it is quite feasible to assume that they even sleep in them. I have been at mixed gatherings of students, social affairs, where there has been dancing

and music, when the male members have stuck close to their hats throughout the proceedings. Whenever I encounter this particular form of barbarism, I am filled with a savage desire to go around knocking off hats wholesale. But Martin has assured me that it would be worse than useless, and that in all probability I should have to suffer further infuriation by watching them stick them on again. This sort of thing is considered collegiate, he tells me, and it's correct to behave as a boor at all times.

One Bloomington resident, a very charming little lady, who is the wife of a minister and quite one of the brightest people in town, laughed at me when I exploded wrathfully on the hat question.

"I knocked off so many one night," she told me, "that my arm ached, and worse still, it was useless, for by the time I had completed the round, they were all on again. I had to get on a chair to get one off. The wearer was so tall that I couldn't reach it any other way, and it simply had to come off, since it was menacing my chandelier, but believe it or not, in less than five minutes, there he was, grinning at me from under his hat."

The American collegiate hide is much too thick to penetrate, so that hints and downright plain speaking are a waste of time. They are insensible to manners in the common sense. For instance, it would be idle to suppose that a student would dream of opening a door for a woman. Even the sight of you, staggering under a load of parcels, is no concern of his. In fact, he is more than likely to slam the door on your nose, or trip you up in his hurry to get there first. This, and worse, has happened to me many times. So much so that I have developed an adept trick of kicking ankles that stand by and obstruct my entrance, a resort that affords me vicious delight, especially

when I hear a whelp of pained surprise issuing from some graceless individual who makes to proceed me and slam the door in my face.

The only time when a male student displays any consciousness of manners is when he is falling in love. This is a signal for a parade of various obvious attentions that are brought to bear upon the lady of his choice. A palaver of very exaggerated courtesies oozes out of him like maple syrup from a tree. He will, for instance, fling open a door with a grand flourish that is likely to break the hinges, and half carry his chosen one through the portals. He will embrace her out of her coat, and arrange it solicitously wherever she says. He will rattle the chair and dust it clean before she sits down, and fling down his coat at her feet, if it will aid her cause. The American girl expects and demands this superficial demonstration of manners from her man. She accepts it in the natural line of courtship. What she will not notice is that it is a lime-light display that is turned on especially for the occasion, and which by the same token will be extinguished with the same adroitness as soon as the evening is completed. Nor will she notice that his manners do not extend beyond herself, and that he turns his back on her girl friend, omitting even to pass greeting, and shoving her casually aside if her presence should obstruct his purpose which is probably to make love, for the American students have precious little reticence when it comes to love-making. They will caress in public with perfect nonchalance. A boy will wrap his arms around his chosen one at a public lecture or a social meeting, while she, in turn, will drop kisses upon him, behaving, regardless of onlookers, as though the world was made entirely for them.

The feminine element presents a quite different aspect to that of the males. Actually it supplies a very decorative touch to the American scheme of mass education. The majority of the girls come to college because the boys are there, and mostly to annex a husband. This, of course, requires a certain elegance where outward appearances are concerned. To aid them in their exploits, the fashion houses design high styles, season by season, that are calculated to bring about the desired results.

Co-ed fashions are a big note throughout America. There are clothes for the class-room, dresses for "coking," as an appointment for consuming Coca Cola is called, and frivolous befrilled versions for the dance floor. All are designed with that cunning touch of allure, of sophisticated simplicity guaranteed to churn the emotions of the too ready males. A closer view will reveal carefully tended fingernails, lacquered in exotic shades, and perfectly tinged complexions. The girls about campus are usually hatless; curly heads are exquisitely coiffured for the most part, and fetchingly adorned with gay ribbon bows, while sometimes a gardenia is artlessly tucked behind a pink ear. Trim little suits, slender ankles, long lengths of silken legs, high elegant shoes with exposed toes and heels, jaunty coats that in spring are cast aside for flowered and neatly tailored dresses, so that all in all the girls make an attractive addition to the university picture and are as pert and irresistible as the red robins that skim the lawns.

The American woman on the whole is very clothes-conscious. Outward appearance counts for a very great deal, and how to look attractive is an important part in the education of Miss America. If the instinct of good dressing be ever so latent, in a student it will take but a few months of college life to set it

flourishing, and the homeliest sparrow very soon develops into a strutting peacock. That most of the college lasses succeed in grabbing their men early in the term is not astonishing, for Eve in her late 'teens and in her brightest array would be likely to storm the most hardened male skeptic, much less inexperienced and callow youth.

A sorority house runs very close to being a matrimonial bureau. In fact, the dividing line is too slender to be discernible. A house will accommodate anything from twenty to sixty girls, each of whom is selected for her social and attractive qualities. The fraternity and sorority houses are by far the most imposing establishments in the town. Some of them assume sumptuous proportions, and this is true in all university towns.

Presiding over a sorority house is a matronly person who acts as chaperon and is known as the house mother; comely ladies for the most part, who are completely blind in one eye and extremely short-sighted in the other, a curious infirmity that seems to afflict all of those whom I have met. One and all, they are incorrigible matchmakers at heart, reveling in the sight of their brood and their many beaux, while they aid and abet Cupid to the best of their ability.

"Aren't they a swell crowd?" one house mother beamed on me recently at a social evening when the house was over-run with boys dancing and paying court each to his particular fancy.

"Most attractive," I agreed, as flower-like figures of grace swam back and forth.

"Oh, they really are," she bleated rapturously, "and each one is so sweet. The boys are just crazy on them." Then from behind a plump hand, she waxed confidential. "Do you see Rosamond over

there?" she said, pointing to a blonde and willowy figure. "The poor child has had an awful time. The boy that had dated her all semester just turned her down flat. It nearly broke her heart. He had sent her such lovely presents, you know. Then just so suddenly he seemed all washed up with her."

"Tragic," I murmured, trying to sound sympathetic, as I watched Rosamond dancing cheek to cheek with a sturdy youth, an ecstatic look on her face, and both of them appearing to be in the delirium of love.

"It surely was tragic, I'm telling you," she went on. "Why, you should have seen that child weep. Night after night she sobbed on my shoulder, until I got all wrought up myself."

"Has she recovered?" I asked politely.

"Oh, yes, she's just fine again now that she's got Dick. That's Dick," she said pointing and beaming again. "He's just darling. And I really think he's more for her than the last one. My, but it was so romantic how those two met." And without pausing to take breath, she raced on. "The girls had an open house. They were planning to have things just swell, but Rosamond declared she wouldn't go down. She hadn't got the heart for it, she kept saying. But I took her in hand and gave her a sound talking to. 'You just stop thinking, honey,' I told her. 'Put on your prettiest dress and go right down. You never know but what Mr. Right won't be there waiting for you.'"

"Did she take your advice?"

"She certainly did, and believe it or not, she tripped and fell on the bottom stair, and who should pick her up but Dick? And now look at them! There they are, just like two turtle doves. They'll get married this fall I should imagine, just as soon as Dick graduates," she ended triumphantly.

"Does that mean that Rosamond will graduate too?" I asked, finding it difficult to reconcile the fragile streak of grace with the classroom.

"Oh, dear, no. Why, Rosamond is only a Freshman, but she'll never stay when Dick goes. They seldom do, you know, when it's a real case of love. Can you imagine, but we lost six of our loveliest girls that way last semester. They all left to get married. Now wasn't that exciting?" she chuckled and cast an appraising eye over her brood like a large, satisfied hen.

Martin refused even to smile when later in the evening I outlined the story for him.

"Very smart work," he termed it, "to get their man and make off. Why stay and waste time?" he said. "When a girl can become an M. A. without the benefit of a college degree?"

Actually the university exercises a very definite discipline over a sorority house. For instance, the students cannot come and go just as they please. During the week they must all observe the rules and be within doors by 10:30 p.m., but on Friday and Saturday the time limit is extended, and these two nights are commonly known as date nights, when the students stroll forth, clasped arm in arm, each with his own beloved.

The American college system of fraternities and sororities is as complicated and involved as it is fraught with snobbery. They are all national organizations with the chapter operating wherever there is a university. Nevertheless, there are a few organizations that are altogether too exclusive to raise their proud signs on a state university campus. But even so, they are still legion and they are more than sufficient to maintain a steady rivalry and nourish a rare form of student snobbery.

At rush week, the competition for new members is as keen between the houses as it is among the freshmen themselves. Each organization is over anxious to land the choicest gems available. Parties are arranged on the most lavish scale with each house competing against the other, to out-maneuver and make the deepest impression. Should a socially prominent freshman arrive, there is such a frantic bid to win his favor and pledge his allegiance that he is apt to be confused into making a wrong choice.

Recently a great deal of excitement occurred when it was rumored that a freshman, who had arrived mid-term, was none other than a foreign baron. Forthwith, a great palaver set in among the various houses, each determined to win the social plum unto themselves. But the Baron was cautious. He accepted all invitations, dined and lunched first at one house and then at another, maintaining a condescending attitude, and seemingly in no hurry to attach himself to any one organization. Great was the disappointment indeed when at the height of the competition, the boy's mother descended upon the scene and announced that she had come to take her son back with her to the East Side of New York. The pseudo-baron turned out to be a boy who was suffering with illusions of grandeur.

It is equally important for a girl to see to it that she gains admittance into a socially prominent sorority, else she will find that she does not get dated by the boys of the exclusive fraternities, since it ranks in the nature of social slander for a top-notch fraternity man to date a girl from a second-rate sorority house, or vice versa. Either would immediately lose caste, in the eyes of their fellows.

Admittance into the grand and secret order of the fraternity is a gradual process. The chosen ones,

who are known as pledges, take their places in the house in a subordinate guise, for what is actually a term of probation. It sometimes transpires that the freshman does not find the fraternity system all that he imagined and gracefully slips out and joins the unorganized ranks. But those who are wishful of becoming honored members and are ready to swear a life-long allegiance are in due course initiated through an amazing system or ritual. The week for initiation of pledges is known as "Hell Week," and during this seven-day ceremony all manner of refined torture is brought to bear and practiced on the terrified aspirants. Many strange sights are manifest during this period. For instance, one fraternity insisted upon all its pledges riding half naked upon a broom stick round the block and up into the house. Another house blindfolded its pledges and took them out of town by night and dropping each of them in different spots not less than seven miles from home, left them to find their way back. Another boy was enjoined to secure an unclothed dressmaker's dummy, which resulted in his telephoning the owner of a local store.

"Pardon me," quavered a voice at 5 a.m. in the morning. "But could you oblige me with a naked figure of a woman? And please excuse me, but she must have a bust."

"What?" roared the astonished shopkeeper, rudely awakened from his rest. "I've got no such thing."

"Please," begged the anguished voice at the other end of the wire. "This is Hell Week, and I just have to get a woman's figure from some place. I don't dare to go back without it, or else—"

"Or else what?" roared the shopkeeper.

"I'll get licked, that's all," came the frightened reply.

Much could be said for the abundant good nature of the store owner who got out of his bed and in a temperature below zero went down to the town to open the store and discover the woman's form for the cold, trembling lad. This, however, was not the completion of his task, for having acquired the body, he next had to take it out to the local cemetery and stand it beside some particular ancient grave that also had to be discovered in the darkness. And here again the kindly storekeeper came to his aid and went along with him to help him complete the ritual. When I remarked to the benefactor the amazing extent of his good nature, he brushed the praise lightly aside.

"Well, shucks, what else could I do? I couldn't see the poor kid get licked. He was scared to death anyway. I'll bet he felt badly enough having to call me up in the dead of night. I only hope the kid made out all right."

One of the tasks that befell a feminine pledge at this time was to scrub out the kitchen with a toothbrush and empty a full bath of water with a teaspoon. This penalty kept her fully occupied for twenty-four hours on end, nor was she allowed to sleep between times. If you remonstrate with a senior fraternity man on the ridiculous and somewhat vicious aspect of the Hell Week system he will argue that the more severe the hazing the better it serves to develop stamina. If a pledge falls down on his job then he deserves a licking to teach him resourcefulness.

CHAPTER XVIII

STUDENTS AND FACULTY

Travel presents no kind of difficulty to the American student, and getting to places, no matter how distant, is among the simplest aspects of his existence. The American college men and particularly those of state universities are the most accomplished hitch-hikers on the road. Cadging lifts from all and sundry has been developed to such a fine degree that if the railways and other legitimate means of transport were dependent upon their patronage they would long since have ceased to function. The American student depends solely upon his thumb to get him about, and a thumb correctly crooked will carry him across the continent. It is the most valuable joint that the college student possesses, a compelling instrument that has rendered legs and money unnecessary requirements for travel.

When vacation time approaches the students pack their bags and make ready for home, and whether home be fifty miles away or a thousand is of little consequence, since distance plays a small part in the American scheme of life. The important thing is that the students will set out in full confidence of reaching wherever they wish to go.

Week-ends, and most particularly at vacation periods, students line the main roads for often more than a mile of every road leading out of town. Parked less than a foot apart with their bags dumped beside them, they stand patiently by the wayside with their thumbs sprouting like brambles. Nevertheless, they

present a challenging attitude, and it is almost impossible to run the gauntlet without relenting. Someone in the long line of thumbs is bound to wear down the most stubborn resistance, and before many miles are traversed, whether or not you have planned a quiet journey, it is more than likely that you will end up with a car load of students to bear you company.

There is nothing like a thumb for getting a man to places, they all stoutly avow, and if judged on performance, this seems a pretty accurate statement.

One student who once cadged a lift from us to Chicago, and whose home was in New York, a distance of some thousand miles, told us that he had always managed to hitch-hike a ride there and back twice a year.

"But how can you be sure that someone will oblige you?" I asked him.

"Well, the chances are all with you," he assured me. "Sometimes it may mean sticking around a bit longer, but it's a sure thing some guy will show up. That don't mean that you always strike the kind of a guy that you like most," he went on. "For me I like to sit quiet in a car, take a look at the scenery and things like that, but some chaps just want to gab all the way, particularly the road salesmen. They're real jawers. If it gets too hot on a long trip, I hop off and pick up another."

"That ought to teach them a lesson," grunted Martin in a tone of sarcasm that went totally unheeded.

"Oh, I don't know," continued the youth naively. "I guess those fellows get awful lonesome on the road all the time. They just can't stop talking once they get started. Gee, but I reckon it feels kinda swell to ride in a train," he mused pensively, as we were compelled to stop for a train to steam by.

"You ought to try it sometime," popped Martin again.

"Yeah, I mean to one day when I get through school," he returned.

"Do you mean," I interrupted, "that you have never been on a train?"

"No, ma'am, I certainly have not yet. Nor on a bus either, if it comes to that. I've hitch-hiked my way so far, and I've seen some mighty fine towns, I'm telling you," he ended on a note of complete satisfaction.

Hitch-hiking has become such a recognized means of travel for students throughout the states that a nation-wide club has been instituted that is known as the Silver Thumb Organization. For a small fee this national club issues an insignie which is stuck on the student's baggage and which serves to identify him as a bona-fide student traveler and not to be confused with the common tramp.

There are some people, however, who are definitely opposed to hitch-hikers, maintaining that if a student is without funds he has no right to tour the continent on his wits, and create a nuisance on the road. And if he has means, then it is his business to travel by train and bus like any other self-respecting citizen.

One man who is a rigid opponent of hitch-hiking and who can usually stay immune to a whole regiment of begging thumbs, succumbed one day during the middle of winter to the lone thumb of a desolate looking student who was standing pathetically, inches deep in snow. Very grudgingly and much against his better judgment, the man pulled up and offered the lad a lift. They had not proceeded very far, however, when the motorist wanting to know the time, felt in his pocket for his watch, but it was gone.

Immediately his passenger became a thief in his sight, and without a moment's hesitation he whisked out a pocket revolver.

"Hand me over that watch!" he thundered menacingly, covering the boy with the gun. Petrified, the lad tried to explain that he did not have any watch. "Don't try that stuff out on me. Just you hand it over this instant or I'll blow your thieving brains out!"

The boy, who no doubt considered himself the victim of a hold-up, fumbled for his own cheap watch, and handed it over to the infuriated driver, at the same time beating a hasty retreat from the car and running in fear of his life. Meanwhile the man slipped the watch into his pocket without so much as a glance at it, keeping the lad under gun cover, and congratulating himself on having dealt successfully with a gangster. He confessed afterwards to extreme mortification when reaching home he discovered his own watch ticking face upwards on the dressing table where he had carelessly left it. Nor was he able to make amends to the boy.

When vacation time draws near, vehicles of every description heave into sight. Any kind of conveyance is spruced up and made ready for a journey, and those students who are not professional hitch-hikers and do not possess a car go the rounds seeking the cheapest possible means of transit. Some of the more enterprising men charter any dilapidated car and charge a nominal rate for a self-conducted tour. Comfort is the least consideration on these occasions, for many a car with springs that have long since ceased to function are crammed full of students and baggage and rattle off on a thousand mile jaunt or more.

Anything that responds to gas is considered suitable conveyance, as one youth amply demonstrated when he hired a disused hearse. Two benches were fixed inside where the coffin usually reclines. This was considered a highly profitable arrangement as the benches would accommodate nine passengers. The fare was fifteen dollars without flowers for a round trip to New York and back. There was one lad, however, who had booked his seat in the car but who turned down the option at the eleventh hour.

"Gee, but when I got a look at that black death house I just couldn't imagine myself driving in it," said Harold. "It kinda gave me the creeps. Too symbolic for my stomach, I guess."

"You've got no guts," the driver told him. "Water gills," he spat contemptuously. "Why, once we get going and some singing starts up, you wouldn't know it from a regular bus."

"Oh, yeah?" returned Harold, unabashed. "Well, I haven't heard yet of the corpse that got up to sing. I kinda feel that a darned thing like that would kill any kind of singing. Besides which, I don't believe my maw would get a hell of a thrill at seeing her baby come home in a hearse."

Whether or not Harold possessed a prophetic sense, I don't know, but the hearse gave trouble from the start. It may possibly have resented being jostled out of its mournful pace, and being forced to tear along the road carrying a mob of boisterous people, for after a few miles were traversed, the tires commenced to blow out one by one. Most of the first night out, the hearse was jacked up whilst the nine passengers crawled in and under, repairing one puncture after another. On the return journey things were even worse, and a few miles out of New Jersey it refused to budge. After a few ominous

death rattles the engine expired completely. The culminating indignity of the trip was that nine students completely out of funds at the end of their vacations were compelled to hitch-hike the thousand miles back to Bloomington.

"I could have told them," Harold grinned to me afterwards. "That thing sure had doom written all over it before it left. What beats me is that any one of them are here to tell the tale. I never believed that it would bring them back alive."

There are, of course, some students who possess their own motor cars and these very fortunate young people are a continuous source of envy to the many who are less privileged.

2

The word University has become a trumpet blast throughout the United States. The sound has penetrated into hidden places and brought forth recruits from the humblest ranks, even as from the wealthy. Aspirants emerge from the farm and slums in equal numbers, animated by an invincible purpose that succeeds in carrying them on to the realization of a cherished dream. In many respects, the state universities are a testing ground for democracy. Every man can have his chance. It is only the approach that varies, and while college is often a playing field for the more fortunately endowed, it is a place of very serious intent for the student who is stalked by poverty. And it is this courageous and stalwart army that vindicates the idealism of the mass education experiment. Not only do they constitute the serious element of the scheme, but they are the impetus of the nation. It is from their kind that America draws

constant inspiration, and gains her superabundance of rugged truth and endeavor.

Usually the student who makes good in college after having worked every inch of his way is a pretty stout fellow. He needs more than physical endurance to see him through. He must also be animated by an indomitable spirit. There is little leisure for him and less still, any opportunity for play. His days are a finely charted schedule of work, classroom, and study, with seldom a penny to spare for the smallest item of luxury. That thousands of such students make good each year and manage to graduate with honors is a tribute to themselves and a priceless boon to their country. They supply a steady transfusion of spiritual strength into the nation that bore them.

Working his way through college is a far more romantic sounding phrase than it actually is, and certainly it is none of the things that it might appear from a distance. The students who arrive in a college town without means of existence are heroes indeed, with a hardy streak of endurance and self-confidence. At the beginning of the academic year, many of them would present a pathetic sight were it not for their own confidence and the consuming will to succeed. I have met many such, but in each case as I remember, they have each persevered and managed to overcome whatever stood between them and the goal of knowledge.

One case in point was that of a lad of eighteen. He arrived actually penniless save for his college fees, and those he had paid over immediately lest the temptation of normal appetite proved too great. He was a small, under-nourished looking boy, who looked considerably less than his eighteen years. Shabbily dressed, he had little to aid him but a quiet

winning smile and a compelling sense of trust. His family was extremely poor and barely able to support itself, so that knowing poverty from birth, luxury or even comfort was the least of his worries. Despite all physical handicaps, he had made up his mind for a medical career, and so far as I could gather from his shy and hesitant statements, nothing was going to balk him from his desire. His last two summers had been spent in Chicago, working in a pawnbroker's shop. He had worked eighty hours a week to collect the fees that had brought him to Indiana University, and would start him on the way towards his goal.

"And how did you live and manage to save during this time?" I asked him.

"Live," he smiled, fixing me with his large dark trustful eyes. "There wasn't too much time for living, I guess. I was working all the time. But the boss wasn't such a bad sort of guy. He let me sleep in the basement, and that way I could save most everything." I looked at his small, shapely hands, spatular and strong, despite their arduous labors, and at his sensitive mouth, and firm fearless chin, and realized that I looked upon an embryo of greatness.

Martin, too, must have felt something of the kind, for he immediately exercised what influence he possessed to get the boy some suitable work. But as the semester was already under way, the task was not so simple. The best jobs had already been filled by the early arrivals, the enterprising young people who come early and scoop the town clean of all the available jobs. However, little Morris was eventually provided with a semi-caretaking job, one that included housecleaning and window-washing. It meant that he must scour floors from 8 a.m. to 9:30, attend

classes until noon, then go back to his housework until 3 p.m. After that, there are more classes until 5:30 p.m. Some evenings he works in a café for the price of a meal, and the rest of the time is his for study. But the important thing is that he is happy because he is getting closer to his ultimate aim. His wide smile is always close to his lips and his quiet dark eyes are trustingly full of dreams. In the summer he will hitch-hike back to Chicago, and spend his vacation most likely working for the pawnbroker, spending his nights in the cellar, and doing it all gratefully for the price of his school fees.

Morris is but one of thousands so engaged throughout America, young people who are content to perform any sort of menial task so long as it provides them with a means of existence during college. The same is true also for countless girls, and difficult as it is for the boys, it is even more so for the girls. They cannot, for instance, hitch-hike their way to and fro with the same impunity as the boys. And then again, a girl's general up-keep is more costly than a boy's.

There is one girl whom I met immediately after she arrived from New York. She is a diminutive child with soft grey eyes and a startling vibrant quality of voice. When she spoke, her words came ringing clear with a confidence that allayed my own miserable apprehensions. Her worldly wealth amounted to ten dollars over and above her school fees, which to me appeared to be an uncomfortable state of affairs. Particularly with the semester under way and jobs, as I knew, being few and far between.

"Whatever inspired you to come so far afield?" I asked her. "Why didn't you choose a college nearer to your home?"

"Well, Indiana has a pretty good psychology set-up, for one thing," she told me, "and again, the fees here are among the lowest anywhere, I guess." Ten dollars would last her for several weeks, she assured me. And it would be just too bad if something didn't show up before then. "Besides," she said, on a note that was crystal clear, "I'm ready to do anything that will buy my eats."

Nor was it any kind of idle boast, for the small supple hands that could charm the piano into music and cast a spell over her listeners with a rendering of the Moonlight Sonata were soon engaged scrubbing floors in a cafe. Her duties commenced at 6 a.m. each morning, and by scouring and cleaning out the kitchen, she earned her breakfast. The same thing exactly occurred for three hours at mid-day and again in the evening.

"Well, that's some kind of a start," she laughed two days later when I met her. "I was confident that something would show up. Now at least my meals are guaranteed." In a little while she was able to give up the café job to work in the kitchen of a sorority house, and thus she was assured of her bed as well as her meals. Three months later, Beatrice had graduated from the kitchen to an office, where she is acquitting herself most efficiently as a secretary to one of the professors.

"My, but people have been just swell to me," Beatrice is constantly exclaiming. "Isn't it just grand the way things have turned out?"

With her improved conditions a notable physical change has taken place. Beatrice has lost the little care lines that marked her young mouth. Her face is round and happy, and her grey eyes have acquired a light that matches her startling voice. For hers is

the kind of spiritual courage that recognizes no hazards and brings its own reward.

And then there is Sally, another of these youthful Amazons who has fought her way into a cap and gown. Her enthusiasms are like a river in full flood. Sally has dishwashed, scrubbed floors, run errands, been a secretary, and typed words like a fiend inspired, and has still found time to organize youth groups and can take her place at the piano and bang out any sort of tune to suit the company. Hers is the kind of inexhaustible energy that takes everything in its stride, that leads to the coveted goal.

Another boy who has proved himself a king of enterprise came to the campus more or less penniless. In a very short time he had established himself in a trailer and he not only houses himself, but he takes in lodgers. At one time he shamed many a Bloomington householder by accommodating a refugee. This very resourceful young man earns his support in divers ways. One part of his business is to cut sandwiches that he sells about the campus. Another is to make a book on the football and basketball matches, and at vacation time he organizes trips to all parts of the country by chartering motor cars and prodding them into active service.

Adjoining the campus is a modest boot-repairing shop that is owned by Greeks. The proprietor and his wife who work in the shop know very little English. They are dark genial people, who count themselves rich in the treasure of their children. They have three sons and one daughter, all handsome and virile looking people, and each one busy gaining an education at the university. One boy is studying law, another medicine, whilst the two youngest are freshmen in the School of Arts and Sciences. During the peak hours of business the students don leather

aprons and take their places at the work benches, and at every slack moment they repair to their own small individual study desks that stand at the back of the shop. Running parallel with the counter is a shoe shining bench, and when a shine is required, one of the sons will take to his knees and produce a polish that rivals a glistening mirror, returning, when he is finished, to his studies. It is an interesting sight to watch the smiling, benign parents among their studious brood. A wealth of conscious pride lights their faces as they watch their children realizing their dreams, and fashioning them into realistic shape.

America has countless such families, developing in her midst. They are representative of the finest democratic principles. In a generation from now, there will be nothing but their dark eyes and inherent grace to identify them with the country whence they came. Environment will have land-locked them to herself, and they will emerge a strong and efficient part of the American nation. It is this crusading army of youth, whose imagination has a stake in reality, working and plodding on to a purposeful end that complements the campus and offsets the boisterous and casual element.

3

Of sterner stuff is the faculty. There are more than three hundred professors and instructors at Indiana University, and any one of them is as unmistakable and as easily recognized as a June frost. For some reason, the average American professor is a singularly joyless person. He seldom smiles, and out of the classroom he maintains an impenetrable silence. In any case, few of them are endowed

with social graces so that to sit silently in company, even though the occasion be a party, causes him no shame whatsoever. Whether silence is a self-imposed notion of dignity, or the natural development of the one-track mind that renders a man dumb out of his own department, I don't know, but I defy the average layman to derive any gay response from the general run of American mind workers. Monosyllables are the most that you can hope for.

I once sat through an agonized meal, placed next to a professor in the English department, and after exhausting all media of polite conversation, I gave up the attempt and relapsed into the prevailing doldrums. Like the majority of his kind, he never indulged in outdoor games, and read no literature beyond that of the nineteenth century. Anything more recent was judged altogether too frivolous for his fastidious mind, while mention of journalism caused him to curl up in horror. Under such circumstances, conversation is narrowed down to a fine margin, and almost impossible to maintain. Nor is the English professor unique. On the contrary, I have encountered many more from other departments who are equally dumb when it comes to pleasant exchanges.

One rare exception to the common rule, however, is a psychology professor from New England. He is relatively a newcomer to Bloomington, which possibly accounts for his refreshing sense of humor and particularly charming manner. There is something reminiscent of the Englishman in his modest vein of personal understatement. Actually, he is considered among the outstanding authorities in his particular field of study, but in his own estimation he amounts to very little, yet where his colleagues are concerned, his power of praise knows no bounds.

"You really must meet Doctor X," he once told us in a voice that was filled with reverence. "He truly is one of the most astounding people, quite one of the most learned fellows that I know. You'll enjoy meeting him tremendously," he assured us.

When the great day dawned, however, and we set forth to be overawed by the remarkable Doctor X, the only outstanding quality that I was able to discern in him was his remarkable gift of silence. For fully three hours he sat enshrined in a pall of quiet that would have done justice to a mortuary parlor. Only occasionally was a monosyllable dragged from his unwilling lips.

The one and only diverting note of the entire evening occurred during dinner when the breezy son of the house, suffering under the weight of silence, asked Doctor X if by any chance he had listened to Jack Benny's radio program of the previous evening. The moment of shocked surprise that ensued could not have been exceeded had a bomb suddenly exploded in our midst. A dull flush slowly mounted to the brow of Doctor X, who, deigning no reply, bent his outraged head over his plate. The moment of tension was relieved by the host himself, the New England professor, who, in the midst of carving the joint, suddenly waved the knife aloft and gave forth a great hoot of laughter.

"Well, really, John," he rebuked his son, between guffaws, "just imagine asking Doctor X, of all people in the world, such a question! The very idea of your supposing that he would ever have time to listen to Jack Benny! I apologize, my dear fellow," he laughed to his colleague, "for my son's lack of appreciation. Just because we listen to Jack Benny is no reason at all to suppose . . ."

"But what's wrong with Jack Benny?" I burst in flippantly. "It's an excellent program. We would never dream of missing it. Or is it that you don't care to laugh?" I asked Doctor X.

Again a rose flush of reproach mounted the august cheek, as he fixed me with a silent but scornful eye that was meant to wither any further levity.

"Fibber McGee is my wife's favorite," interrupted Martin, "with Charlie McCarthy a close second. By the way, have you tried the Professor Quiz program?" he asked the now ominously quiet guest of honor.

"We do not possess a radio," the silent one's wife answered from the opposite end of the table. "We are always pleased to laugh whenever something funny occurs," she ended sententiously.

Martin's "I see," had an overpolite implication that succeeded in extinguishing the one amusing incident in a long dull evening.

Perhaps it is due to the solemn silence of their kind that Bloomington professors in general all appear to have been stamped out of the same mould. They all have a curiously flattened look, as though they had been slept on, while the leaner members appear to have been squeezed out of a tube. All but the President, who is a shining example of buoyant avoirdupois. Not only does he enjoy the distinction of being one of America's youngest university presidents, but more amazing still, he has managed to preserve a fat, round, jovial expression. Even with his blackgown bundled around his rotund figure, and a mortar board smothering his glossy wavy hair, he would still make an ideal advertisement for Quaker Oats and an illustrated example of all the vitamins at work.

Standing among his glum priests of knowledge there is evidence of the irrepressible imp. It glints

in his quick dark eye, and ripples in his smile that reveals teeth of the first American flawless grade. At thirty-six he is undoubtedly an unusual person from many aspects. For one thing, he confounds all cultural principles by heading the university without a doctor's degree, his explanation being that he simply has not had time to decorate himself with this minor distinction. He is himself the product of a small Mid-western town, and is therefore considered to know all the requirements of a growing state university. That he is both energetic and enterprising is an established fact. Nor is his genial smile the mask to a more austere personality. On the contrary, he is as affable and approachable as he appears. This is easily proved by his easy accessibility. Every Tuesday afternoon his office is thrown open and made free to all and sundry. At this time any student can wander in and discuss anything he wishes with the University head. And if his visitor feels that he knows the President well enough, whether he be student or otherwise, he may address him familiarly as "Hermie," short for Herman, which is the affectionate title by which he is known to countless people throughout the state of Indiana. His attitude may indicate a supreme flair for native politics, but he is, nevertheless, considered an unrivaled president, possessing all the push and flexibility of manner requisite for a growing Mid-western college.

We were present at his inauguration, a most imposing ceremony, at which were gathered the entire student body, all the town's people and seemingly all the past and present teachers of this century. Scholarly paraphernalia floated galore, as professors of all sizes and possible description, gowned and hatted, trooped silently into the vast assembly hall.

Trailing black that was as dismal as the darkest night, they gradually filled up the large center reserve, creating a scene of concrete gloom. On the stage were seated the high dignitaries and grand executives of the State and University, all of whom were impressively gowned, with here and there a dash of royal purple and ermine to heighten the effect. Dignity was unfurled with a grand flourish, even to the trumpet blast that was supplied by the University brass band.

The one distracting note on this history-making occasion was the American method of publicity. Not only were the entire proceedings broadcast, but there is no function so dignified in America that it would exclude the press photographers. Whatever happens, they must be there, and on this occasion they more than fulfilled their mission. Camera men seemed to crawl from under learned gowns, bob from behind posts, prowl in pairs and fours under the stage, while numbers of them were literally suspended from the rafters. No word or gesture escaped their busy lenses. Every speaker was photographed in every change of posture—smiling, scowling, or blowing his nose. And when the new President himself stepped up to the microphone, the entire battery of cameras closed in upon him, flashing lights, clipping and snipping between each word that he uttered. The blinding fusillade was enough to shatter the wisdom of a Socrates himself, much less the youthful rotund person who was declaring his first vows of State allegiance. That he survived the merciless onslaught and duly delivered his oration with becoming smiles was a tribute to his adjustable self.

The crowning feature of this momentous morning was when the university choir rose in a black body to sing its praises, but alas, Indiana is not blessed

with a celestial choir. There are no coloratura sopranos or musical contraltos among them, no booming baritones or dulcet voiced tenors. Rather, en masse, they sound like a spring crop of frogs, croaking with gusto but devoid of music. The Dean of the Music School presented a pathetic sight as he waved an anguished baton before them, trying frantically to persuade a note of song from his unmusical pupils. There were many in the audience who watched sympathetically as the gifted Dean, casting dignity to the wind, threw back his gown and clawed the air as though he were about to climb the wall in his vain and frenzied quest of song. It is to his lasting credit that he at least achieved volume and that each choir member's face was dyed a deep purple when the crescendo note was reached. That they achieved a roar resembling a dynamited quarry, proved without doubt that all were trying. A general sigh of relief went up when the brass band finally struck up the Indiana college battle cry, a song that threw the entire assembly on its feet, and even brought an acclimated note from the usually grim-faced and unsmiling faculty.

CHAPTER XIX

SMALLER TOWNS

Bloomington with its eighteen thousand inhabitants, its town square, and its host of civic activities plus the cultural adornments, is a metropolis compared to many of the smaller towns surrounding. They abound in all directions and scatter along the different highways in a number of interesting guises. Many of them are no more than a handful of toppling timbers that look likely to collapse in a puff of wind. Yet there is no town so small in the United States that it does not advertise its presence with a sign board stating its name and population. What must surely rank among America's very smallest of small towns is situated less than thirty miles from Bloomington. If you wish to catch a glimpse of it in passing, you must watch very diligently, for in a flash it is lost, and there is nothing to indicate its existence save the sign board, prominently placed along the highway. The name is Carp, and its population is thirty-three. This is announced on two large white boards, and printed in thick, black lettering. The two boards sandwich a tiny group of wooden cottages that snuggle deep in a cluster of trees. Whether or not the thirty-three inhabitants comprise one family, the sign does not say. But Carp, according to the American viewpoint, is a town with a boundary line entirely its own. It is unique in so far that it is remote from any larger town, and exhibits no particular reason for being. There are no farming activities visible, nor is there the usual avenue of petrol

pumps that are the mainstay of so many such places. Carp would appear to the beholder as a few old friends that have shaken down together, and gone into retirement to end their days peacefully, and just to prove their right, they have hoisted a sign above their sanctuary.

Indiana, like the rest of the United States, is composed of innumerable towns, small and large. It has more than four hundred fully incorporated towns, with populations varying from a few hundred to several hundred thousand, and in addition to these, there are an equal, if not greater number, of unincorporated towns, incredibly small places but composite units since they each put up signs and pronounce their established rights by virtue of name and numbers.

There is an external resemblance about many of the larger places, inasmuch as the majority boast of a town square with a court house seated in the center, and a surrounding line of shops, many of which are familiar links in the inexhaustible chain of American stores. It is a poor place indeed that doesn't own a Woolworth's, a Kresge's, a Penny's, and an unfailing Atlantic & Pacific food market. But here similarity ends, for each town has its individual interests, and all have attracted different groups of citizens to themselves.

No two towns throughout America appear to breathe quite the same atmosphere. There is always some distinguishing difference either in custom or manners, the inherent traits possibly that have been preserved and handed down by the original settlers. Many of the names themselves reflect origins, such as Terre Haute, Lafayette, or Montmorency. Names that tell their own story and conjure up a vivid idea of French penetration, just as Frankfort, Schneider.

and Fredericksburg denote an early German invasion.

One outstanding feature of American towns is the civic pride of the inhabitants. It is a quality that runs deep and intense and if a town is not remarkable in terms of beauty, then it is bound to possess some estimable and outstanding merit in the consciousness of its people. The town always ranks first, next comes the state, and it is by this remarkable sense of creative pride that the great American nation gains its impetus and nerve, for the average small-town American is as alien to New York and the great show places of the nation as are the wide-eyed foreign tourists who pass through.

The north of Indiana tells a vastly different story than the south. The country itself presents a flat, uncompromising scene, colorless save for the large towns where the heavy industries prosper. Steel mills and oil refineries are the two dominating industries of the north and, because of these, the population is dense, and the towns appear bleak and forbidding. A large foreign element has invaded the Northern cities, with a predominance of Polish settlers. The people themselves are dwarfed in the shadows of the massive plants and girders, human cogs in a vise of steel. At night the sky is alight with blue flames issuing from the blazing oil tanks, and the air is sodden with the acrid stench of burning oil. There is nothing cordial in this calloused area, struggling, as it is, in the grip of mechanized activity. Rather, it conveys a sense of caged bitterness, an inescapable prison for the people who are caught in its toils.

Towards the South, the landscape softens, and the flat prairies rise into rolling wooded hills. Bloomington, which lies directly south, is ideally situated from a scenic aspect. It adjoins Brown County which

is one of the acknowledged show spots of America. And the tiny towns and hamlets that nestle in among the wooded heights and curving valleys enjoy a gracious simplicity that seems native to the soil.

There is a noticeable lack of tension, too, in these parts. Life takes on a somewhat dreamy measure which is reminiscent of the still deeper South. Yet for all the visual beauty of Brown County, the land is a niggardly task-master that returns small profit to the peasants. It would seem to resent plow and tractor, preferring to exhaust itself in a seasonal pageant of natural beauty, in which color rides supreme. In autumn the hills and valleys are dyed in myriad shades ranging from palest pink to scarlet and deep purple, and in the spring when the froth of new green appears, blossom and dogwood splash color profusely. But in some strange way, this particular strip of country seems to defy cultivation. The rich-looking golden loam is an arch deceiver that returns stones for every tree hewn down by the farmers. In a scene of unrivaled loveliness, poverty stalks barefoot, and those who have dared to encroach upon the jealous reserve of beauty find themselves an incredibly poor and backward people.

The small farming towns in this vicinity do not prosper, nor is there any chance for them to develop beyond their seeded proportions. Along one winding road that leads into the heart and picturesque center of Brown County is a whole chain of small incorporated places. They run very much to pattern, a few wooden cottages, a handful of population apiece, an odd shop here and there, and the inevitable avenue of gaudy petrol pumps. Slim heads of cattle grazing over the green slopes furnish an added beauty to the quiet scene, while chickens and hogs help to supply a farming atmosphere that in effect is mostly

illusion, for nowhere is there evidence of a fruitful yield or prosperous contentment.

A little further along lies the little town of Nashville, and although this is another infinitesimal place in the light of numbers, it nevertheless presents a totally different aspect. The population totals three hundred and sixty-nine, yet this tiny town is infused with activity and exercises a rare fascination. This is particularly true in spring and autumn when Brown County, flowering at its best, lures a steady stream of tourists from near and far. But Nashville is far more than a tourist resort. Today it is an active center for a number of creative artists. Painters, sculptors and pottery makers have set up house in the hillside haven, and created an atmosphere that closely resembles Barbizon near Paris.

Nashville has fifteen resident painters, with many others who come for long extended periods of work. Their houses and studios, mostly of the log-cabin variety, peep between the wooded landscape, and add a picturesque touch to the countryside. From the artists' viewpoint, Brown County is the ideal artistic environment, and actually a strange phenomenon has occurred. For they have turned evidence upon the grudging land, and what cannot be wrenched from the soil itself is being transposed onto canvas, and turned into artistic and enduring profit. Nashville maintains its own diminutive picture gallery for the exclusive exhibition of the Brown County artists. There are products of many schools to be found upon the walls, but whichever medium of expression is employed, there is a pleasing lack of eccentricity, and the principal inspiration is gained from the glowing scene provided by Brown County.

The tiny town is peppered with curio and antique shops. Almost every house and window is used to

display articles for sale, most of which are the hand-created products of the town, such as basket-work, hammered metal, wood-carving and pottery. Also the antique stock, which in truth is merely an old-fashioned assortment of oddments that have been salvaged from the large disbanded Southern homes.

In addition to the painters in Nashville are the pottery kilns. Small individual furnaces are presided over by artists who slave continuously to model exquisite creations. Many of the examples of pottery to be seen glow with the loving touch of reverent fingers, and there are some pieces that rival the subtle tints and glaze that identify the lost art of the Ming and Sung dynasties.

At week-ends during Nature's show seasons, Nashville is thronged with sight-seers, and among the town's many fascinating attractions is a tiny, old-fashioned jail. Actually it is a small log-cabin, the only inviolate part of the building being the iron door that is unlocked with a key thirty-six inches long. For the rest, a strong arm or a stout boot could easily shatter the place to ruins. An old bearded resident, wearing a large Southern hat, mounts guard over the historic hut and admits sightseers for ten cents' admission charge. When business is slack, however, as it appeared to be on the day of our visit, he hops about the entrance very much like an old man kangaroo, shouting bargain prices to any hesitant-looking prospects.

"Come see the jail," he called. "Don't miss the greatest sight in all Brown County. Pay ten cents and come inside the old original jail."

"How much for two?" bargained Martin.

"Can't make it no less for two, no siree, I don't believe that I can. Bring three along and I'll make it twenty-five cents," he called artfully, pulling at his

black beard and grinning a smile that revealed blackened stumps of teeth. "Four for thirty, four for thirty," he went on, reducing costs for greater numbers.

As we were only two, we paid our twenty cents, and stepped within the evil-smelling hut. A mass of junk met our eyes. The four small walls were festooned with rubbish, and the whole was hung with dirt and cobwebs. Most of the things were entirely irrelevant to a jail. An old woman's hat hung on a peg, a clock was suspended on a nail, a stuffed eagle scowled from the wall, while such things as a child's tattered dress and a broken pair of boots provided part of the show. And worst of all was a gruesome freak of nature, a sheep with two heads. Once inside the cabin, the old man, acting as instructor, broke into a long unintelligible chant as he hopped about pointing from one thing to another. The whole of the rubbish that he described as being more than a hundred years old, looked to have been purloined from a surrounding dust heap. Round and round he skipped, muttering into his beard, and looking up between sentences begging not to be interrupted. That no one showed the least intention of interrupting him passed his notice.

"Don't interrupt me," was a part of his recitation, and to delete it would have robbed his eloquence of the dramatic. Just as hopping to the door every few seconds, and shouting reduced rates to likely prospects was part of his stock-in-trade.

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Another curious feature of the Indiana hill-people is the manifestation of freak religions. A town is seldom too small to boast of at least one church, if

not more. Deep in the hill country of Indiana, their humble places of worship belong to a disestablished and unorthodox variety. They are relics, for the most part, of the evangelists who swept through the country during the latter part of the nineteenth century, and who in their frenzied emotional flight left behind them some of the most amazing keepsakes to which the backward element still faithfully adhere. Very often the church buildings are no more than wayside huts, but in these same places are to be found the most astounding range of primitive religions yet created by white men. They reject all association with the established church, referring to it with scorn and derision. According to them, religion must be revealed in some outward form of emotional ecstasy, and in so far as it fails to induce visible frenzy, it is not religion.

Many sects of a like nature are still flourishing in Indiana. Their names are various, the Nazarenes, the Pentecostals, the Holy Rollers. The latter sect actually conforms to its title, and when religion really commences to work, its adherents will use themselves so convulsively, rolling and screaming, that often a white-heat hysteria is induced. So intense is it at times that a worshipper will yield the last atom of physical control and drop unconscious to the floor.

We visited one group of a similar order, that is situated quite close to Bloomington. The church is a simple framework affair, larger than many of its kind, with seating accommodation for between four and five hundred people. On this particular Sunday evening, the church was filled to capacity. The place was unadorned save for a crudely painted head of Christ, and a roughly hewn crucifix, studded with scarlet electric light bulbs, that resembled great clots of blood. At the far end of the building was a raised

platform, where the pastor and his six church elders sat. On one side of the platform was an orchestra of seven banjos and a piano, while on the opposite side was a choir of six men and six women.

Among the many astounding features was the complete and utter lack of discipline and unity. Prior to the arrival of the pastor, pandemonium reigned. People talked at high pitch, and shouted greetings from one end of the building to the other. To add to the general clamor, the banjos maintained a steady strumming, with each player indulging his individual fancy, and playing any tune that came to his mind. At least one-third of the congregation were children, who before the service commenced, turned the hall into a playground. They raced in one door and out the other, jumping over seats and tumbling in the aisles very much like wild, spirited horses. Quite a number of them had brought their toys along with them, and settled themselves down to an evening's play. One boy, seated close to me, kept a catapult and ammunition in his hand, with which he amused himself by surreptitiously menacing first members of the congregation and later the pastor and his elders. His antics kept me in a state of suspense, since any moment attack seemed likely.

Another child had a scrap book, and a pot of glue with her. She settled down blissfully, fixing in pictures, and seemingly oblivious to all that went on about her. Several children had brought dolls, and odd favorite things which kept them content and engrossed throughout the strange proceedings. More than half of the women had babies in arms, and these were being constantly coaxed into quiet with a natural feed, while one and all, including the elders and choir, chewed gum.

The pastors who serve such orders are laymen chosen from among the congregation. Quite often they are illiterate people without knowledge of philosophy or Biblical history. This particular pastor opened the service by urging the people into the right mood. He relied on a few sentences that were something of a chant theme, repeating them over and over. There was no formal prayer or reverent commencing, merely a gradual ascent to passion, as he continued repeating the same few lines.

"Let the Lord see, brothers, let the Lord see," he said time and again. "Show the Lord now what we can do." As the words gained impetus, they were accompanied by eloquent jerks and flourishes. Then when the moment was judged right, one of the elders sprang to the front and gave the signal to sing, and at the same time, the entire orchestra of banjos and piano burst into music. The hymn, or song as it was called, resembled a lively measure of jazz. It was sung over and over, gaining momentum with each repeated chorus, until the six elders, pastor and congregation were all stamping and clapping at one time. The song leader himself presented a hideous sight. He danced about like a demented dervish, rolling his eyes, slapping his body, and generally behaving like a creature bereft of all human decency. Several similar songs were sung in quick succession, with each one becoming more boisterous and frenzied than the last, until obviously the desired pitch of hysteria was aroused.

At this point the pastor suddenly motioned for silence, and invited the assembly to prayer. This signal was answered by the entire congregation rising and leaving their seats and crowding as closely as possible round the platform. Prayers were all individual, simultaneous and aloud, so that the effect

was one of mass incoherent ravings, continuously interspersed with harrowing sounds. At one time, a piercing shriek rose above the tumult to be followed by a dismal howl like an animal in pain. Most of the faces that I could see were contorted as though in physical agony, while many people assumed repelling attitudes, working their arms, and writhing their bodies in an altogether horrifying passion. To see and hear the spectacle at its height was to imagine yourself flung into Dante's inferno.

The service was extremely long, and continued on in the same undignified manner throughout, with more and more singing and several like outbursts of praying. The highlight, however, came with the individual testimonies. These took various shapes. Some people merely stood up and muttered an avowal of faith. Others wept aloud, while there were some who, rising up, broke into a wailing song in which everyone joined, accompanied by the banjos. Several more intense members appeared to adopt trance-like attitudes, and stood mute and swaying, as though controlled by some mystic force. One woman, quite close to us, assumed such a pose. She stood with her arms extended, her eyes closed, and a repelling look of mad ecstasy covering her features, while she swayed back and forth, like an ill-driven thing. A thin line of saliva oozed through her parted lips, and slobbered, uncontrolled, onto her dress. When at last the spell relaxed, she broke into a half-sobbing and terrifying-sounding song.

There was no such thing as inhibition anywhere among these strange worshippers, for as fervor mounted, testimonies grew highly competitive. Everyone had something to say, and at the least sign of frenzy abating, the elders were quick to rush in and whip it up again. This was achieved by flinging

some startling and challenging testimony out into the ring. At times it seemed that two-thirds of the assembly were on their feet at one time, each ready to outdo the other in some primitive declaration. No sermon, address, or formal approach to prayer graced the entire service, but a collection rounded off the weird spectacle.

"Give, brothers and sisters," shouted the pastor. "Give all you can, for sure it is the Lord can only work through you. He's watching you, brothers, the Lord knows, and if you don't give your share, then the Lord can't do his. See that you keep the Lord working for you, brothers and sisters. Show the Lord what you can do, and give with a large hand." All this was accompanied by an impassioned flourish of dramatic gestures. The swift jingle of small coins following the harangue, proved that these simple ignorant folk were obeying their leader's bidding. Judging by appearances, it seemed as though the Lord worked fairly satisfactorily for the Pastor, for he alone, in the whole meeting hall, appeared well-fed and decently clothed.

To an outsider, it would seem that a good deal of the missionary zeal expended in distant fields could be put to better use among these backward hill people. When I talked to several American clergymen of the established church on this particular subject, they each agreed that some sort of drastic measure is necessary to bring these many moronic groups into more dignified line. But thus far, they assent, the hill people have resisted all missionary efforts. They are suspicious of learning and prefer to stick to their fundamental creeds and crazed manner of worship.

And whilst they continue to indulge in repellent emotional excesses, the sociologists are finding in

them a fertile field for research. There would appear to be a certain menace in such primitive forms of religion, and something to be feared from groups of people whose emotions are educated to boil over at the given word of a leader, for surely it is on such material that a dangerous demagogue might rise to power.

CHAPTER XX

KENTUCKY

Adjoining Indiana is the State of Kentucky, and here again the hill folk compose an incredibly backward element of society. To see and come close to them in stark reality is to confound America's strident cry of progress. For as well as conforming to astounding manifestations of freak worship, it is the Kentucky hill people who all too often startle the general public with news of a child marriage. There seems to be no official age limit for marrying in Kentucky, and any two people, whether they be infants or doddering aged, can procure a marriage license.

One of the most hideous examples of this moronic practice was the recent marriage of a girl aged ten years to a man of thirty-four. Worse still, it was the mother of the girl who engineered the match, and procured the license, passing her child off as fifteen years old.

"It was better for them to get married," the mother testified to the press, "because the couple had been sneaking round with their courting a long time." The child was called in from play and the ceremony was performed before the new log cabin that the bridegroom had built for his future wife. The bride's family of five, plus several in-laws, had all decided to move into the two-roomed house and take up abode with the newly-weds. But this arrangement was rudely shattered since steps were

taken in this instance to annul the marriage, and this resulted in the bewildered flight of the bridegroom.

"My old man has run off and left me," the bride told the judge, "and so I guess I'm not married."

For the most part, however, child marriages among the Kentucky hill folk are countenanced. There have been many similar cases reported in the local newspapers, the age of the bride varying from twelve to fifteen years, while many of them are parents at the latter age.

The Kentucky hill-billies, as they are commonly called, still roam the country barefoot, wearing beards, and keeping guns tucked into their belts, for added to the rest of their unconventional mode of life they are noted feudists. At election times this subterranean civil strife is evidenced by at least several killings. Fights commence and end in fatalities without anyone knowing exactly why, except possibly under the influences of the prevailing excitement, the eternal feud is stimulated anew into fresh gory demonstrations.

It is a far cry from the Kentucky hills to New York, and to see the retrograde type of humanity which inhabits the Dixie backwoods and to realize that they are Americans, is, at times, a severe tax on even the most vivid imagination. They have so little connection with the suave dapper population of the eastern capital, and less still with the glamorous people of Hollywood, yet they are an integral part of the American nation. Haunting the hills and sequestered in sloth and ignorance, they succeed in tying a confounding knot in the national story of emancipation.

Kentucky, the northern fringe of the deep south, is a warm, colorful state. In spring it is top-dressed in abundant beauty. Soft rolling hills are heavily

timbered, and the whole countryside, sprayed with a tender lime green and festooned with blossoms, presents a bewitching spectacle.

Once a year Kentucky flames into national prominence as the scene of the Kentucky Derby, the outstanding turf classic of the country. The race, which is run at Churchill Downs in Louisville, attracts sporting enthusiasts from all parts of the States, and as the great day approaches, people flock in from far corners by train, plane, and car, settling upon the town like a swarm of bees. Every available inch of space is quickly filled, and premium prices are offered for the privilege of a bed. Derby Week is a profitable time, both for Louisville and all the small surrounding towns. Fabulous prices are put upon food and accommodations, making residence in the vicinity impossible, except for the wealthy.

The event is publicized in true American fashion, and the smallest feature is stressed and played up both by press and radio for weeks preceding. Not least among them is the blue grass which is commonly associated with the famous race course, but whether Kentuckians suffer with color blindness, or whether it was that the blue grass was extinguished under the litter of torn paper and broken glass, we were not able to discover.

As a race course, Churchill Downs has no outstanding qualities. It is a race course in a somewhat bare sense, that is in no way comparable to any of the fashionable English courses, and less still, with Flemington at Melbourne, or Randwick in Sydney, Australia.

Properly impressed with all that we had heard we approached it, in our ignorance, with a fitting respect, taking care to eat our picnic lunch in the car a little distance away lest we should desecrate the

ethereal blueness. But to our amazement, we quickly discovered that the American race-goer shows scant regard for his race course, and has no compunction whatsoever in turning it into a general picnic ground, that leaves only the track itself unlittered. From the moment of arrival, we stepped into a vast feeding arena. Everywhere people were eating. Out of nearly one hundred thousand persons, at least seventy-five thousand of them were clasping either a beer bottle or one of Coca Cola. Countless numbers roamed abroad eating hot dogs and sandwiches, while the rest were sprawled over every available inch of ground, camped into picnic groups, eating food out of bags and newspapers, so that where grass normally grew—whether it was blue or green—was a sea of torn paper and jagged broken glass.

Seating accommodation is totally inadequate to accommodate anything like the number of people who descend upon the course, hopeful of seeing the race, and since we had arrived too late to secure seats, we were compelled to wade through the accumulating litter, with the large majority of spectators. Nor was it possible to catch a glimpse of the horses. Once or twice we heard the exciting thud of hoofs galloping on the track, but there our knowledge of racing ended.

"Gee," complained a man, hot on my neck, when the Derby was about to commence, "I came all the way from Texas, and I don't know what a horse looks like yet."

"That ain't nothing," moaned another, "I jogged all the way from California, twenty-five hundred miles, to get a sight of this, and doggone it, I ain't seen a thing. It's kinda aggravating, I'm telling you, after all I've read about it in the papers."

"Well, you don't have to cry about it, buddy," chirped a youth, who was elbowing his way through to the rail. "Maybe if you save yourself a few cents, you can take a good look at it in the newsreel."

Three men who were determined not to be cheated out of a view of the famous race had climbed a flagpole and were balanced on the loud speakers. Just before the race commenced, they were ordered down by the course announcer.

"Will the three men on the flagpole come down at once?" thundered a voice that vibrated over the entire course. Attention was immediately focussed upon the improvised crows' nest, and thousands of eyes watched to see the culprits drop obediently to the ground. But they refused to budge, and in a few moments the pole was surrounded by police and khaki-clad members of the National Guard. Threats and persuasions went up on all sides, but they remained impervious. Much to the delight of the press cameras focused upon the side-show, one burly policeman, hoisted by his fellows, volunteered to climb up and bring the men down. His position on the pole, however, put him at a disadvantage. All that he could do was embrace the pole, looking very much like a greased pole contestant, and shout threatening epithets to the men above him. But when a menacing foot shot out, he slid down to earth with an undignified haste, that brought a roar of applause from the crowd.

A more amusing sidelight was a legal argument that sprang up close to us.

"I'll be darned if I'd come down," said one envious voice. "They paid two dollars and thirty-five cents each to see the race, and they've got their rights. Wise guys, I call them, and that's no fooling."

"Oh, yeah? Wise guys are they?" snarled a disapprover. "When they get down off that pole they're sure going to get slapped right into jail. They've got fifteen days apiece coming to them, I'll bet."

"And more," grunted a pessimistic voice. "I wouldn't like t'eat the rest of the thirty days they're sure getting themselves."

"You're right, buddy," spoke a voice from the crowd. "There's two charges in that, one for being on forbidden property and another for resisting the law."

"They can't do a thing to them," disagreed another. "Besides, how are they going to get them down? Tell me that, someone, will you? Why, those guys can stay up there all night if they're so inclined!"

"Ain't you ever heard of guns?" asked the pessimist, "why, they'll just shoot lead into them, and what's more, they got a perfect right to do it."

"If they was to take a gun to those guys it would be police molestation without just cause," spoke the envious one. "I'd change seats with them right now, I'm telling you straight. They got their rights, ain't they? What harm they doing, anyhow?"

"Resisting the law, that's what, and abusing the police, that's another. It's a case for tear gas if they don't come down," retorted the moralist.

"Maybe they'll burn them at the stake," quavered an excited female. "You never can tell what will happen once the police really gets stirred up."

But despite police threats, arguments, and jeers from the crowd, the three men clung valiantly to the spot until the race was over. Then, one by one, they slid grinning and sheepishly down into the arms of the law. This was a signal for a general stampede,

and instead of the police marching off with their three culprits, they were all at once surrounded by several thousand people who disapproved of the arrests and took great pains to manifest it.

As the fighting threatened to become general we did not wait to see the fate of the wrongdoers. With so many bottles ready to fling, it seemed safer to move off to a less congested spot. Suffice to say, that we had not backed the Derby winner, nor did we have a chance to see what he looked like. We had to content ourselves with a word description of his magnificent girth and record pace from the evening newspapers that we read on the long drive home.

My one regret was the blue grass. It dogged my imagination, and try as I would, I could not rid myself of the feeling of having been cheated out of a novel spectacle. Whenever I chanced upon a Kentucky Derby visitor, I shot the same question, "Did you see the blue grass?"

"No, I don't believe that I did," is always the same reply. And when I met the man who boasted of twenty Kentucky Derbys to his credit, and who returned the same negative answer, I began to wonder if the blue grass is but a Derby legend, or an ectoplasm, most likely.

Nevertheless, Kentucky in springtime is so rich in color that blue grass or not, it still provides a panorama of surpassing loveliness, and to drive through the colonial towns and small unincorporated hamlets, ambushed in tall trees and flowers, is to experience a rare thrill of enchantment.

In relative terms, Kentucky tells a like story to Indiana, inasmuch as it is composed of several hundred towns, large and small, that are diversified by a multitude of industries. Yet one cannot help but

detect a difference in the inhabitants and their customs.

America, as I have come to know it, does not exist in the major cities. New York, with its fanfare and glittering array of modern equipment, can well be marked down as the great provincialism and sorting house of the nation, just as Chicago, Washington, and San Francisco, the show spots that comprise the usual tourist itinerary, are best described as the shop windows. Filled to overflowing with alluring sights, they succeed in delighting the wayfarers, but what they reveal is a superficial splendor, which tells nothing of the great heart beating within.

If one would discover the impetus and philosophy of the nation itself, one must probe deeper, explore the lesser known and humbler haunts and learn the worst as well as the best. All of which goes to create the amazing tapestry of life that is America. Then, and only then, can one come to understand something of the driving force within, and the urge that is the nation's stimulus to greater greatness.

One must see the glowing wheat fields of Iowa, the heavily timbered regions of Oregon, know the lakes and timber yards of Wisconsin, the stark hills and valleys of Utah, the fertile prairie reaches of Illinois, and most of all get into the small towns and come close to the people whose pride they are! For it is the small towns that comprise the fabric of the nation and send forth great American people whose names are writ in international fame. And in discovering the vastness and constant change, the eddying whirls of multifarious design, one comes to discover why it is that America is a fascinating and absorbing place in which to live.

